

The Evolution of English Music

Mauro H. Scott

The old dramatists were apt to begin their plays with a prologue, put into the mouth of some character outside the main action of the play, and then, with the keynote thus struck, they would proceed to divide their dramas into so many acts, each act containing a number of scenes, the whole being rounded off by an epilogue. The plan had much to commend it, especially in the case of historical dramas, when a huge vista of national events had to be presented to the audience within a short space of time, and in speaking to you tonight upon the evolution of English Music, I am venturing to borrow this plan.

The history of English Music is so rich, and runs back through so many centuries, that I might very well talk from now till the next day, without covering the whole subject, unless I pursue some method of "Jumping o'er times: turning the "accomplishment of many years into an "hour-glass". So I intend to give you first my Prologue, in which a tiny story serves as a moral emblem: next my first act, representing the progress of English Music from Saxon times to about the middle of the 19th century: — then a short second Act, in the nature of an interlude

on our national folk music; then a third Act dealing with the extraordinary Renaissance of music in England at the present day, and lastly, a little Epilogue speaking of the future.

First, then, for the Prologue.

Once upon a time, there was a Chinese nobleman magnificently arrayed in silks and embroideries gorgeous with all the colours of the rainbow, and he said to an Englishman, "Why do the men of your nation always wear plain, dark cloth instead of silk?" To which the Englishman replied, "We wear our silk inside" and opening his frock coat displayed the lining.

Now, that story may be taken as typical of English Music; its finest qualities are rarely presented in brilliant colours for surface inspection — as is the case, for instance, in Russian music — and to appreciate it at its full worth we must cultivate an intimate knowledge, something like that the owner had of his coat. Jesting aside, an intimacy is well worth our cultivating, especially when such wonderful developments are going forward in the musical world around us, when such an intensifying of the artistic spirit, and such an abundance of ability are manifest throughout Great Britain. The whole matter is deeply interesting, but I will not dwell on it at present because I think its significance is best appreciated when seen against the background of history.

Having spoken my little Prologue, I will now try to present the first Act — that long period of history which begins

mistily in Pagan times, and reaches up to the middle of the 19th century.

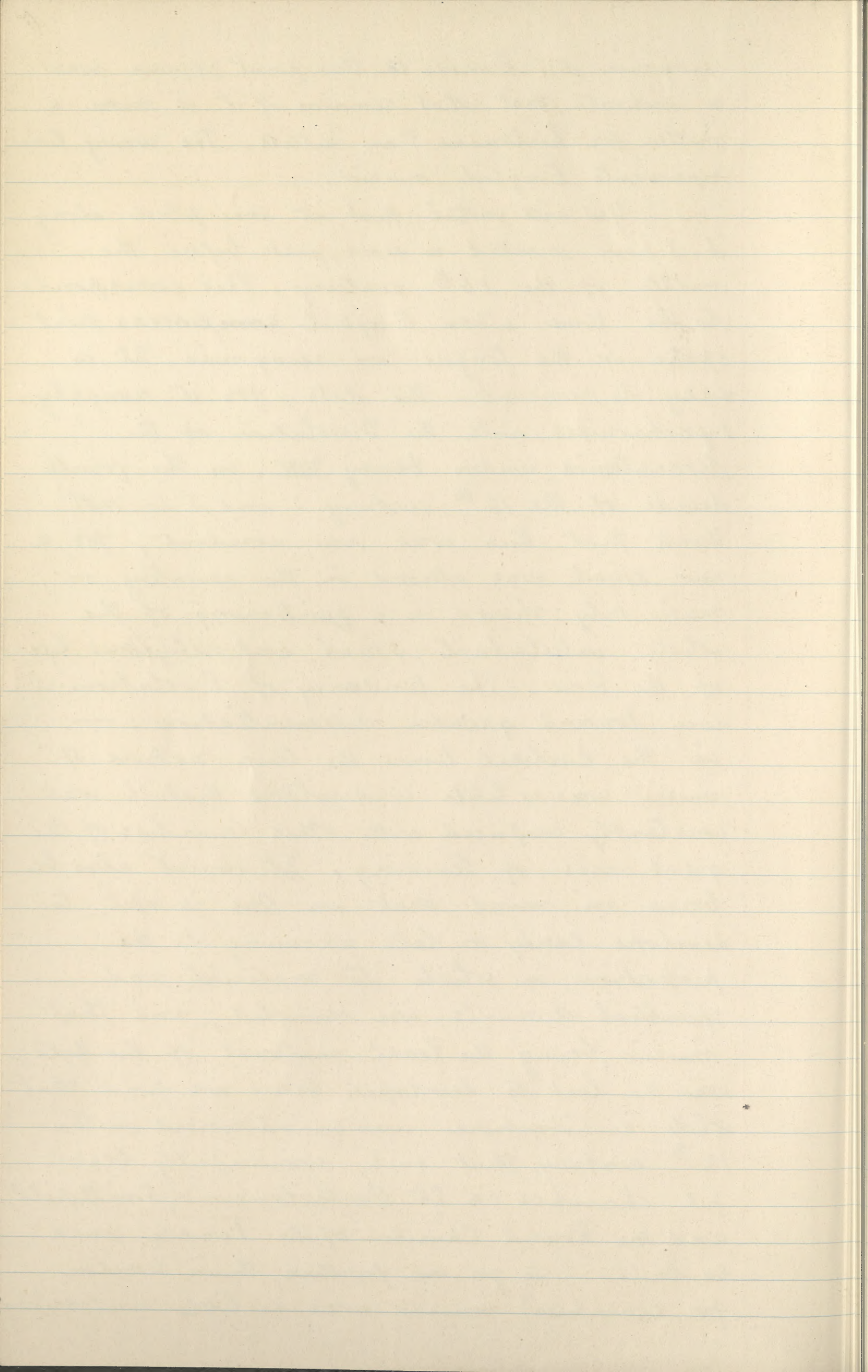
If we look attentively at this sketch of music, we find that it falls into well-defined periods, that a time of progress is followed by a time of decline, that decline is again succeeded by progress. English music, in short, like most other things, exemplifies what Herbert Spencer calls the law of Rhythm. You will remember how in his Synthetic Philosophy he describes Evolution as the ascending history of the Universe, best represented by a succession of curves, or waves rather than by a direct line. It is often convenient to visualize abstract facts, and it helps us to think clearly of them. I have therefore attempted to sketch out a little diagram to convey some idea of the rise and progress of English music.

In the rough and ready diagram which I have sketched out on the black-board, you will see how the different periods of rise and decline form themselves into a wavy outline, which presents to the eye a general idea of the progress of English Music. I am not a good draughtsman, so this diagram entirely lacks geometrical correctness, but it does convey a ~~rough~~ general idea of the facts.

The upright lines stand for the different centuries, -1000 - 1100 -, and so on, while the dotted lines stand for the mid-centuries - 1050 - 1150 - etc. The long horizontal line is partly a guide to the eye, and may also be taken as representing a certain criterion or definite artistic conception of music as we

recognise it. Previous to this point music was so inchoate that what remains of it is more a matter for historians than artists. The wavy line represents English music.

You will notice that at one place along it I have marked a cross, just before the middle of the 16th century. This corresponds to the time when English composers first spoke in the tongue we recognise. It is easy to remember the date, for it roughly synchronises with the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII. in the fourth decade of the 16th century: and I do not think that this was an accident, for a new spirit was abroad in the country — music only shared in a quickening of the whole intellectual, social, and religious life of the time. The tendency of Evolution is ever toward greater differentiation: — in the earliest times the true nature of music was so little understood that it was constantly confused with other branches of the great mass of learning. It must also be borne in mind that an Art is apt to develop early or late according to the proportion in which its material and spiritual elements are mingled, and that music, being the least material of the Arts, was the last to develop. Hence we find that while architecture was so advanced in the 12th century that such wonderfully beautiful churches as St Bartholomew's, Smithfield, and the Round Church of the Temple could be built, (to go no farther than London for examples) music was so little understood



so little differentiated as an art, that Alexander Neckam, (1157 to 1217) foster-brother of Richard I, mentions in a poem that amongst the functions of music is "the explaining why man has two eyes, two nostrils, two arms etc." Even as late as the 15th century, John Dunstable, the greatest musician of his time, not only in England, but in Europe, was described in his epitaph as "an astrologer, a mathematician, a musician, and what not!"

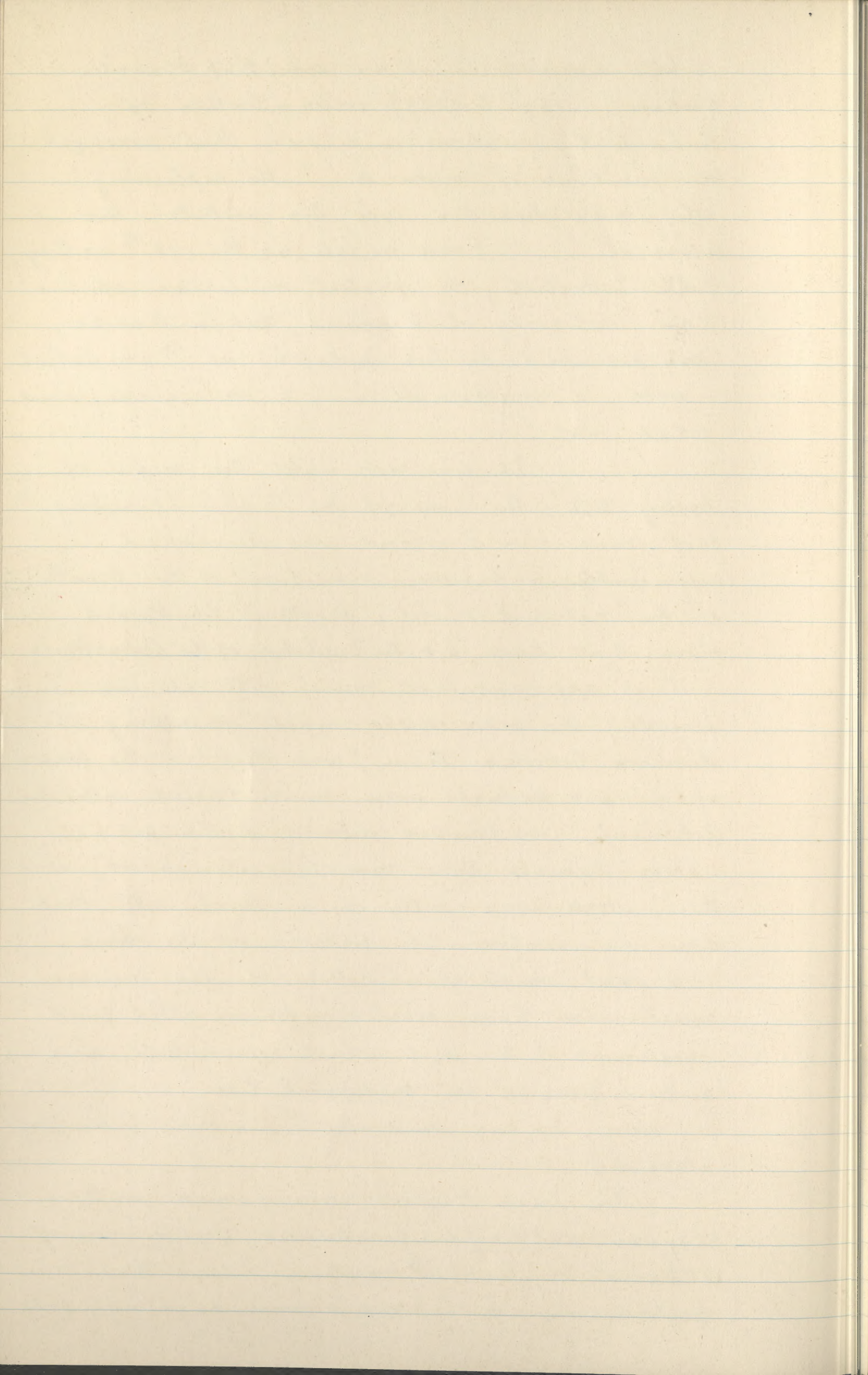
It was not until the reign of Henry VIII, the time of the "New Learning" that music in England was developed sufficiently to become sensitive to the breath of the national spirit. Looking backward from that time, i.e. the Dissolution of the Monasteries it is apparent that music fell into two periods, the year 1400 roughly marking the division between them, and that in the period up to 1400 theorists were much busied with the technical, constructive details of the art.

These theorists were mainly ecclesiastics, and their work was fully on a level with that done by Continental nations of the time.

A great mass of unwritten secular music must also have existed, for we often find references to the part which minstrels and harpers played in mediæval life.

Here, too, we could hold our own with any abroad.

The Irish harpers were famed for their playing, and Giraldus Cambrensis, Archdeacon of St David's in the 12th century, says that their performance is "rapid and dashing, yet



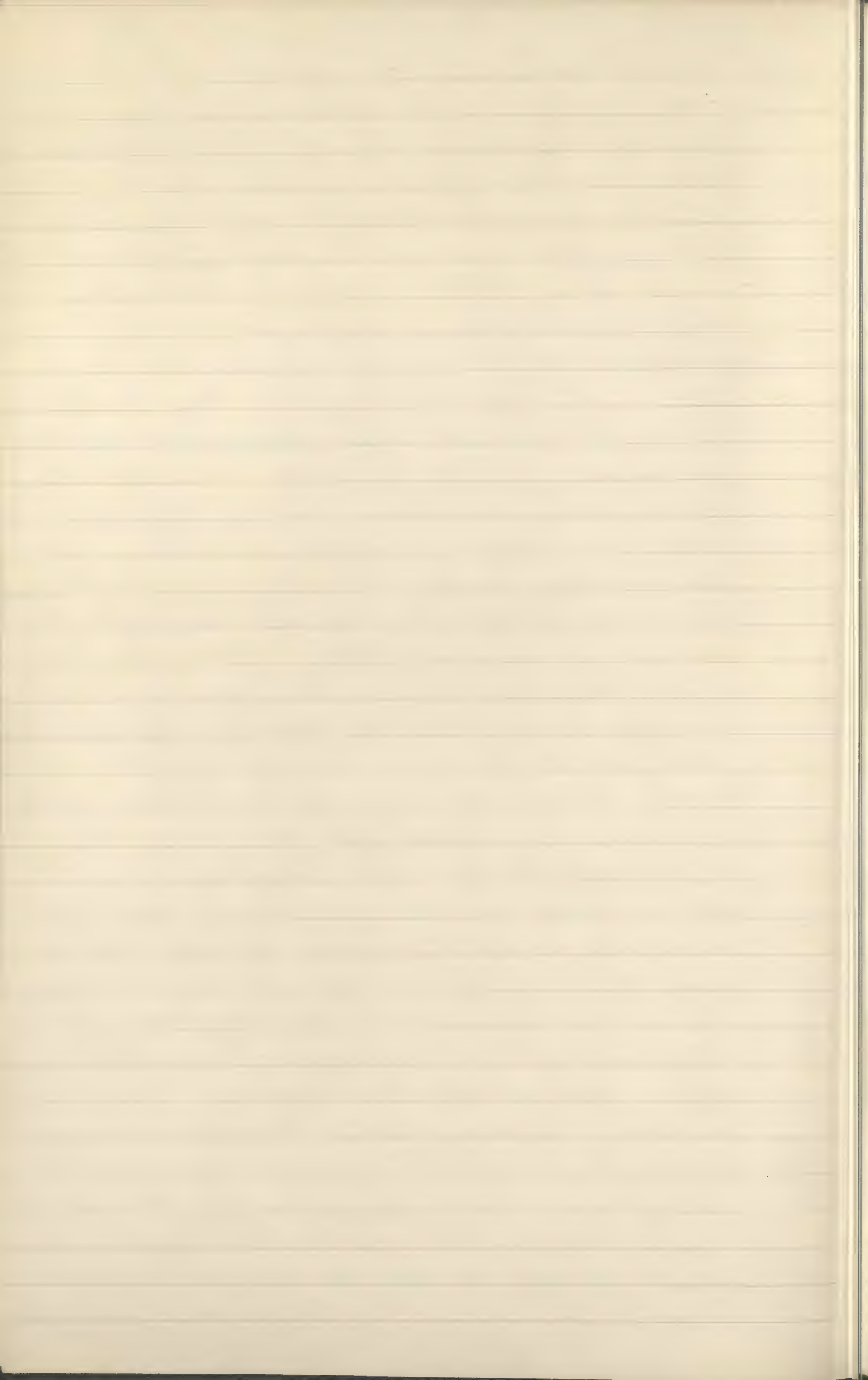
a gentle and pleasing tone effect."

He adds quaintly "It is astonishing that in so great a rapidity of fingering, musical proportion should be retained, and art in every thing satisfied, through involved changes, and harmonies of manifold complication: Swift in delicacy, equal in equality, concordant in dissonance, the consonant melody is adhered to and completed."

While the Irish performed these prodigies, the Welsh and Scotch were not far behind them as harpers, and the English even from early times were enthusiastic singers. There is good reason to think that both the Welsh and Northumbrians practised singing in parts from a very early date, for there is a passage in the writings of the same Geraldus which says:

"The Welsh do not sing their tunes in unison as is the custom elsewhere, but with as many parts as there are singers, all finally uniting in consonance and organic melody under the sweetness of B flat." No one quite knows now what that means, but it is very interesting!

Indeed, we often feel confused and baffled by the scanty records, the crude compositions which have come down to us from that period, but amidst the vague fog of an immature art, one marvellous composition stands out with startling clearness. This is the Rota (or Round) called "Sumer is i-cumen in" in which four voices combined in a canon above what was called a Pes, or sort of ground bass for two voices or two subjects, the whole making a six-part composition. The melodic charm and extraordinarily finished



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workmanship of the Rota are far beyond any other music of the period, and are absolutely amazing when we consider the date, which is placed by experts between 1220, and 1240.

The manuscript which is now in the British Museum, is in the writing of John of Fornssete, of Reading Abbey, but it is very doubtful if he was the author, and some experts claim a folk-song origin for the melody.

After this wonderful composition (which I have indicated on the diagram as the first thing to reach a definite artistic standard) nothing very exciting is recorded until the appearance of that John Dunstable of whom I have already spoken. His work begins the 2nd division of English music, which covered the time from 1400 onward to the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Practically nothing is known of Dunstable's life: but it is possible he travelled abroad a good deal, and his abilities were warmly appreciated on the continent. He died in 1453 and was buried in St. Stephen's, Wallbrook.

Dunstable's name will always be associated with the earliest use of Counterpoint - that great means of musical expression which ultimately culminated in the work of the Italian School and Palestrina - and though Dunstable did not actually invent Counterpoint, a noted Netherlandish writer (Tinctoris 1445-1511) describes England as the "fons et origo" of the new art, and Dunstable as the principal musician.

Popular music was also much in evidence at this period. We hear that the day before the battle of Agincourt (in 1415) the camp



of the English rang with music. When Henry V returned in triumph to England he was greeted with songs in his praise, but he forbade it, and ordered all songs to give the praise to God alone

— "Being free from vainness and self-gl^{pride}orious

giving full trophy, signal and ostent,
Quite from himself to God"

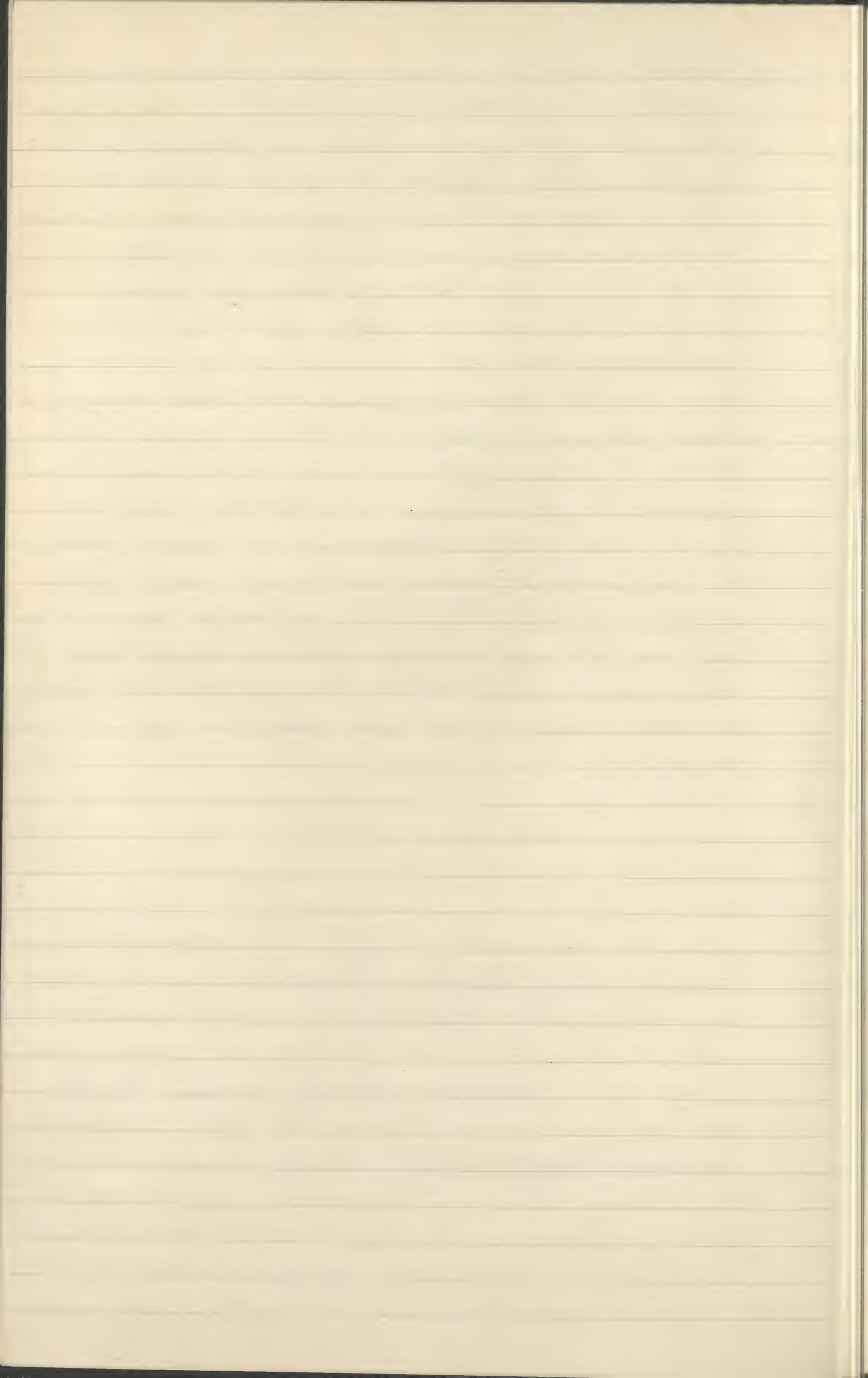
as Shakespeare says.

One of these Songs has come down to us, and I think it may interest you to hear a few verses of it. The song conforms to the King's wish, you will observe, each verse commencing and concluding with pious invocations in Latin, while the centre of each verse, to English words, forms an independant tune. It looks rather as if it had been a minstrel song, altered to meet the King's command. Notice also the quaint and cautious words in the last verse.

Song of Agincourt

After this comparatively active and brilliant period, a severe decline followed, probably brought about by the Wars of the Roses, and England ceased to lead in the musical world. Sordid greed, cruelty and intrigue are a poisonous atmosphere for art. However with the accession of Edward IV things began to improve a little; the first definite mention of the Chapel Royal occurs in this reign, and the King also constituted the Minstrels into a sort of Guild or Society. As Burney says in his history:

"Music, after long living a vagrant life, and



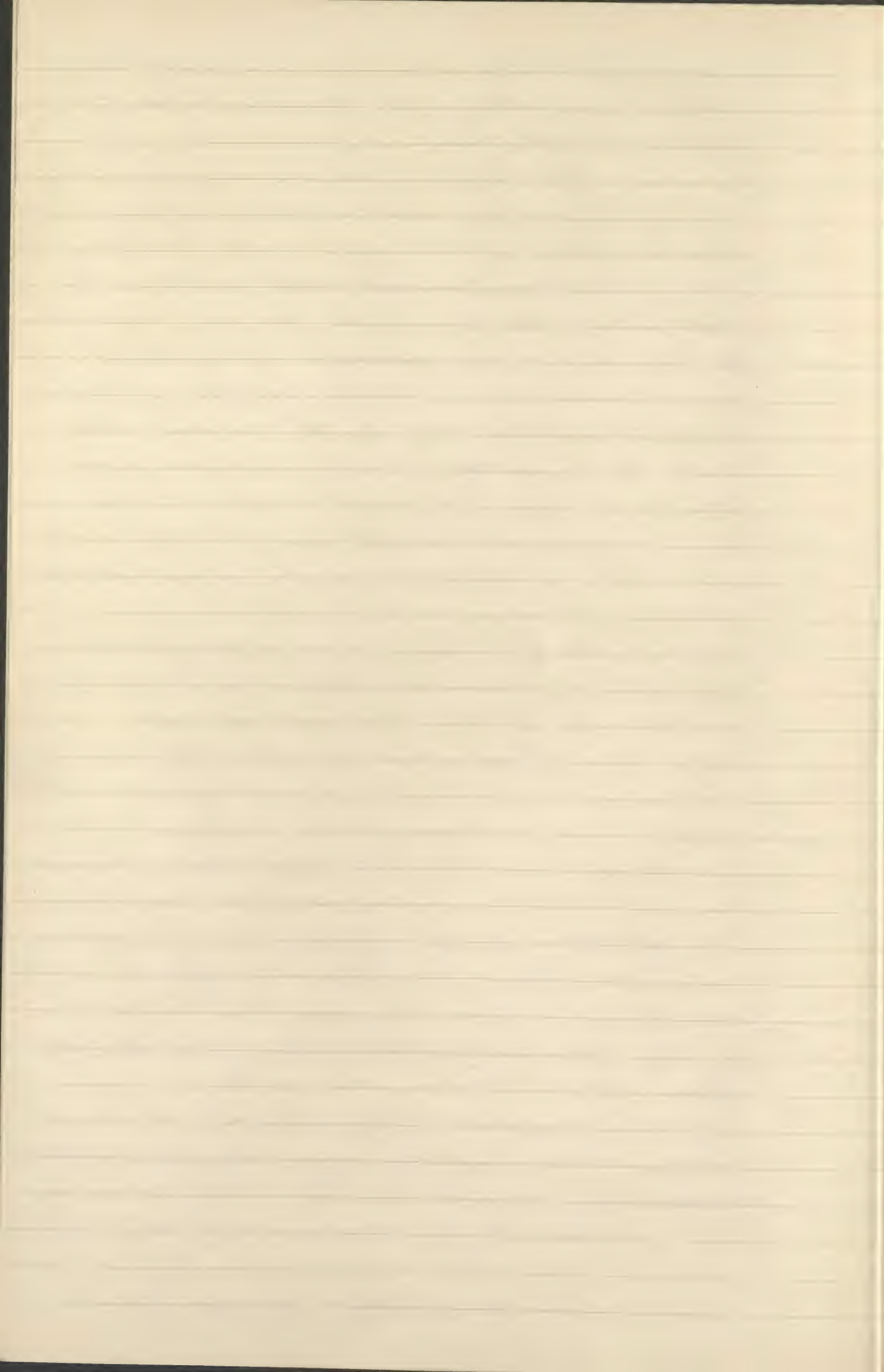
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being passed from parish to parish, seems at length, by the favour of this Monarch, to have acquired a settlement."

This healthier condition continued, till, with the 16th century came the first English composers whose work is actually, not relatively, great. It is from this time, about the date of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, that we may reckon the beginning of that splendid double-crested wave of music, which came to one climax in the choral writers at the end of the 16th century, and which rose to another climax a hundred years later in the work of the finest musician England ever produced till recent times — Henry Purcell.

The greatest work done by the mid-sixteenth-century composers was the foundation of that School of Cathedral Music which is our unique and national possession. Though the Reformation overthrew the existing ecclesiastical order, a happy chain of circumstances preserved artistic continuity between the Roman and the Reformed Church, and the most notable composers of the time, were strong enough to adapt their genius to the new conditions. Such men as Christopher Tye (circa 1510 to 1572), Robert Whyte, his pupil, and Thomas Tallis (circa 1515 to 1585) have left us work which is as strong and pure in design as those Gothic Cathedrals in which it is still sung.

These anthems, services and motets all bear witness to a singular ability, sincerity, sobriety of judgment, and idealism, and many contemporary musicians, such as Marbecke, (who issued the "Book of Common Prayer noted," in 1550) Shepherd, Farrant, and others were no whit behind Tye and Tallis in earnestness of purpose, though



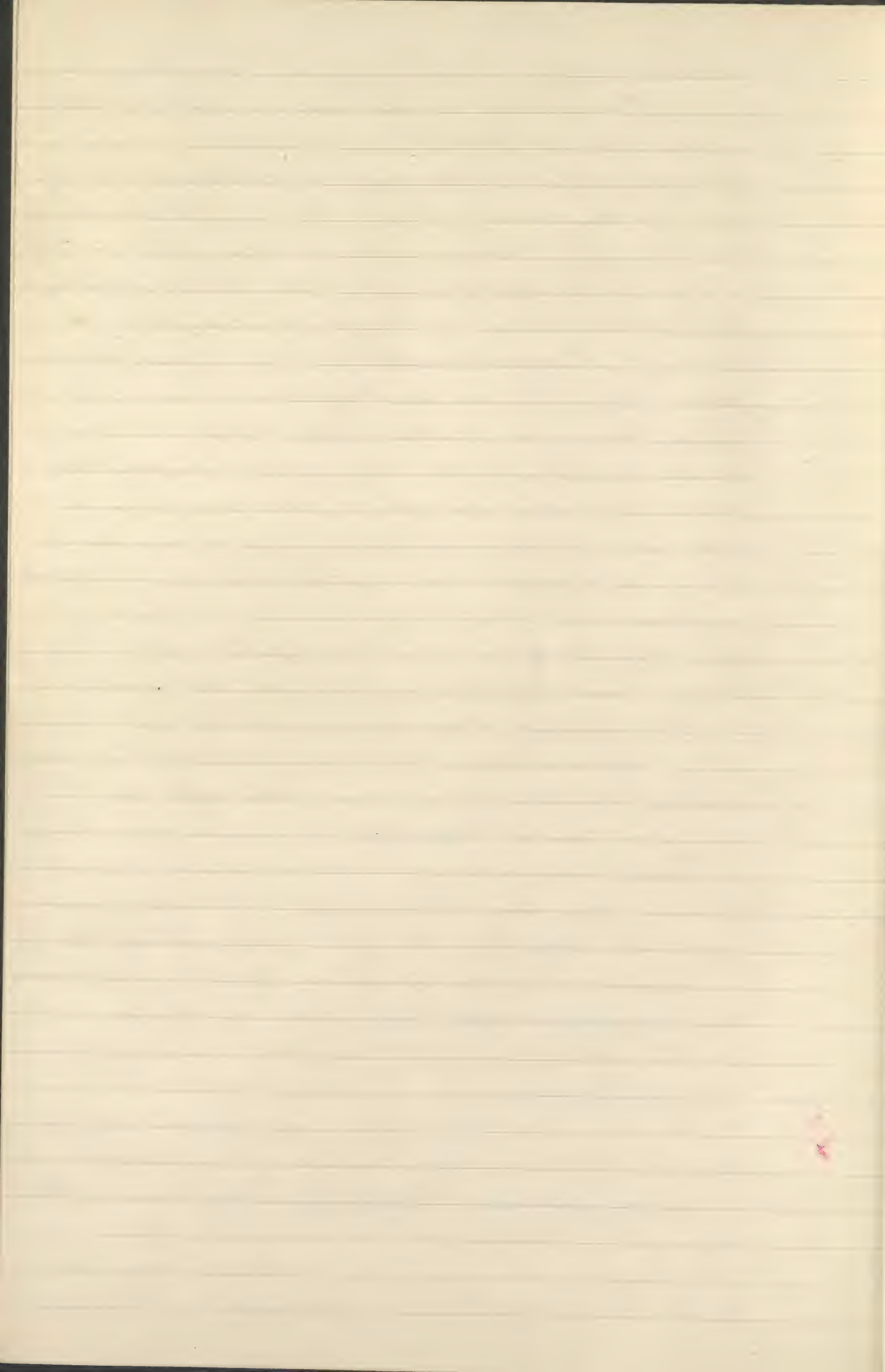
perhaps not quite so richly gifted, musically.

Though folk music had flourished sufficiently in the reign of Henry VIII to be regarded as a dangerous political power, it had developed mainly along ecclesiastical lines, but from the Reformation the first signs of change were apparent, though it was not until Commonwealth times, 100 years later, that music became thoroughly secularized.

Under Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth music expanded into distinct departments: —

Church music: — Instrumental music: — and Secular Vocal music, the last named including solo songs, Madrigals, and ballets, while there was an enormous increase of ballad and dance tunes, which are said to have reached their highest point of excellence about the year 1600. Certainly, such fine songs as "Ward the Pirate" and "The Golden Vanity" seem to date from this time.

William Byrd (b. circa 1535. died 1623) is the composer whose work seems to link the austere beauties of Tyne and Tallis with the spacious times of Elizabeth. He was in fact a pupil of Tallis, and in church music he and Orlando Gibbons (b. circa 1583 died 1625) were unapproached masters, the latter representing the culmination of the genuine English polyphonic school. Gibbons was also great in Secular music, and was one of the most brilliant of Madrigal writers, during that marvellous Madrigalian period, which only lasted about 30 years — from 1588 (the year of the Spanish Armada) onwards. Something in the form of the Madrigal, a composition for voices in which Contrapuntal and Harmonic methods were combined, something in its union of law with



freedom, seems to have appealed irresistably to the English genius, for these Elizabethan Madrigal writers, Thomas Morley, John Wilbye, Orlando Gibbons, and a score of others, not only surpassed all contemporary work, but have remained unrivalled ever since in this direction.

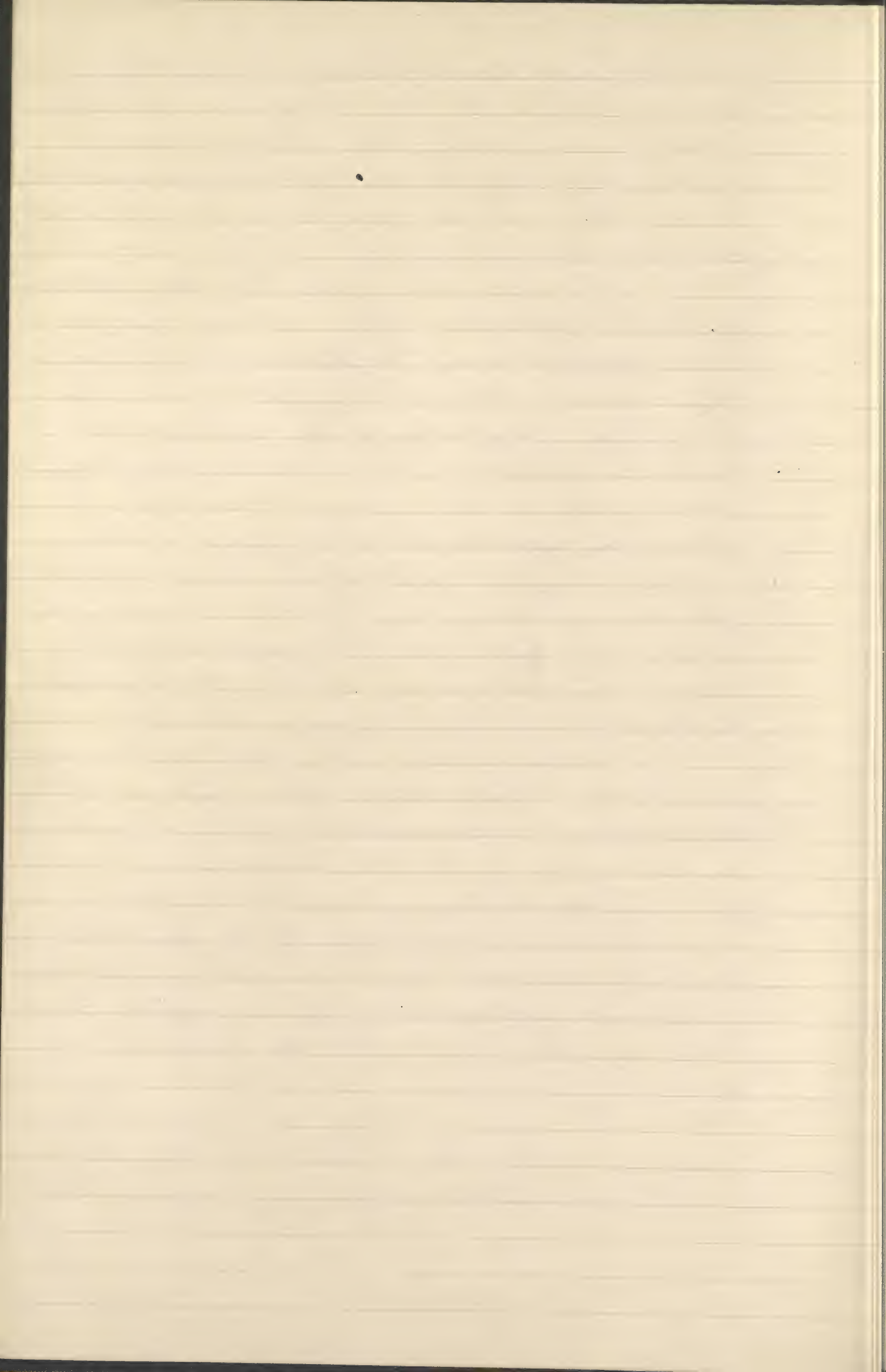
I regret very much that these Madrigals, as also the church compositions of this and the earlier period, cannot be illustrated here, owing to the number of singers required. I can however give you an illustration of the instrumental music; a branch of the art in which Elizabethan composers were in the forefront of progress.

One of the highest authorities refers to this "great English school of ^{music} for Keyed instruments from which all others have sprung;" and if the compositions strike us at the present day as lacking the real feeling and beauty displayed by Elizabethan vocal music, we must remember that instrumental music was still too new to be flexible, and that composers had really accomplished a remarkable feat by divining the true instrumental style at all.

The illustration you are to hear is, "The King's Hunting Jigg" by St John Bull, a famous virtuoso player of that day. It shows a considerable appreciation of keyboard effects, and is not easy to play, even at this present.

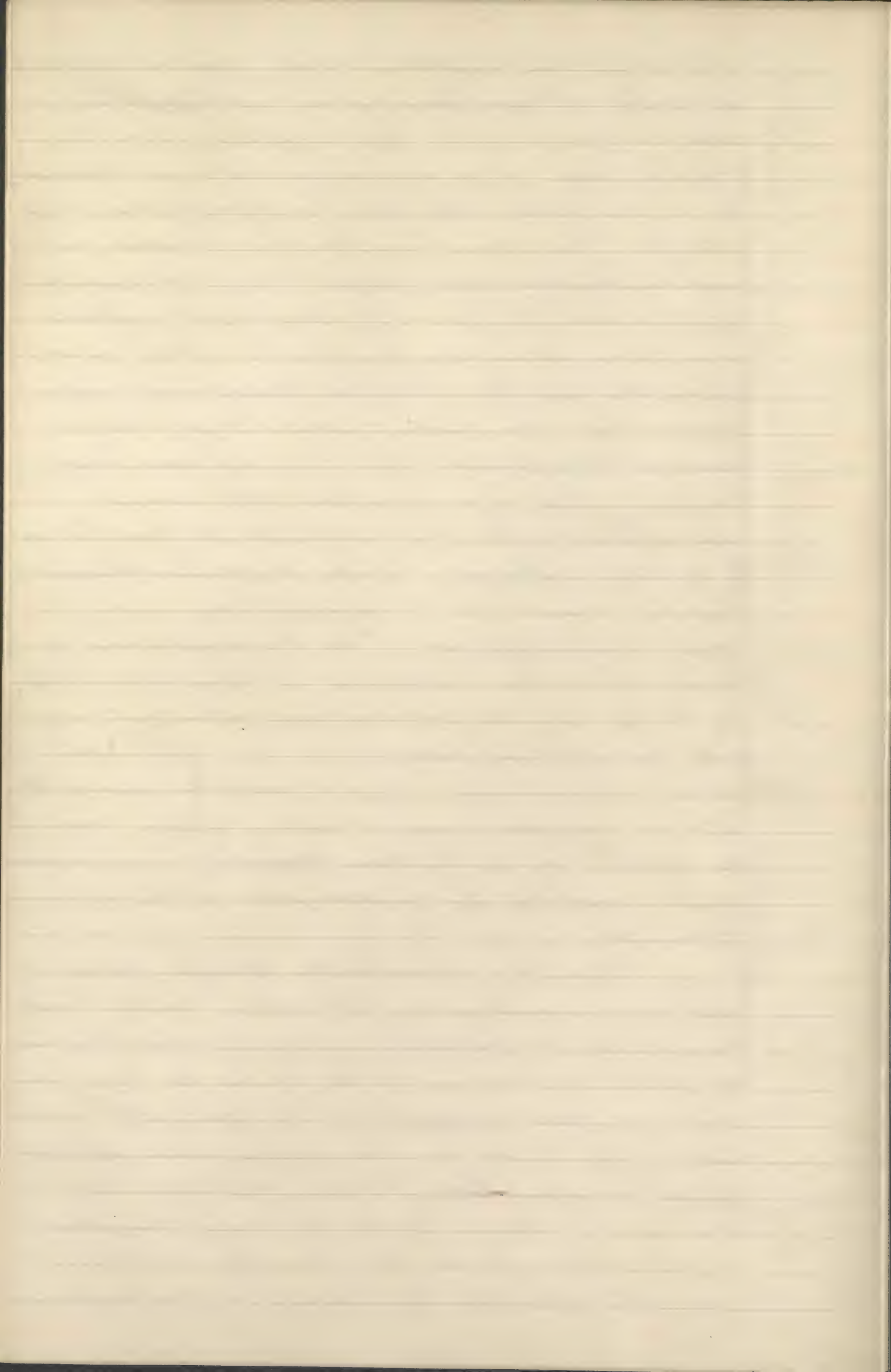
Illustration

The King's Hunting Jigg



Altogether, the Elizabethan music was no unworthy companion to Elizabethan poetry, and though it exercised but little immediate influence upon the world at large, it is a priceless national possession. It is also deeply interesting, as covering that period when the "New Music" — the rise of secular as against ecclesiastical music — the introduction of Harmonic as against Contrapuntal methods — came into being in Italy: — these new principles and their diffusion throughout Europe, proving one of the greatest events that music has ever experienced, but England was slow, to accept these new ideas and still turned instinctively to the old ecclesiastical music as its highest criterion. Under the earlier Stuarts, English music, as Sir Hubert Parry says, made no special progress. All the compositions of Charles Ist reign "represent a transitional state of things, as if the composers were neither quite off with the old love, nor on with the new. Some strong influence was needed to make the change of attitude complete, and it seems to have been the attitude of the Puritans towards church music which completed the secularization of the art in England."

Under the Commonwealth, church music had been discountenanced, but secular music had been greatly encouraged, and thus, when Charles the second was restored to the throne, the time was ready for those composers whose work still holds such a high place in our history, and for that special composer, Henry Purcell (b 1658-d. 1695) who was "without doubt, the most able and most fertile of all the English composers." — as Monsieur Amédée Merceux, an eminent



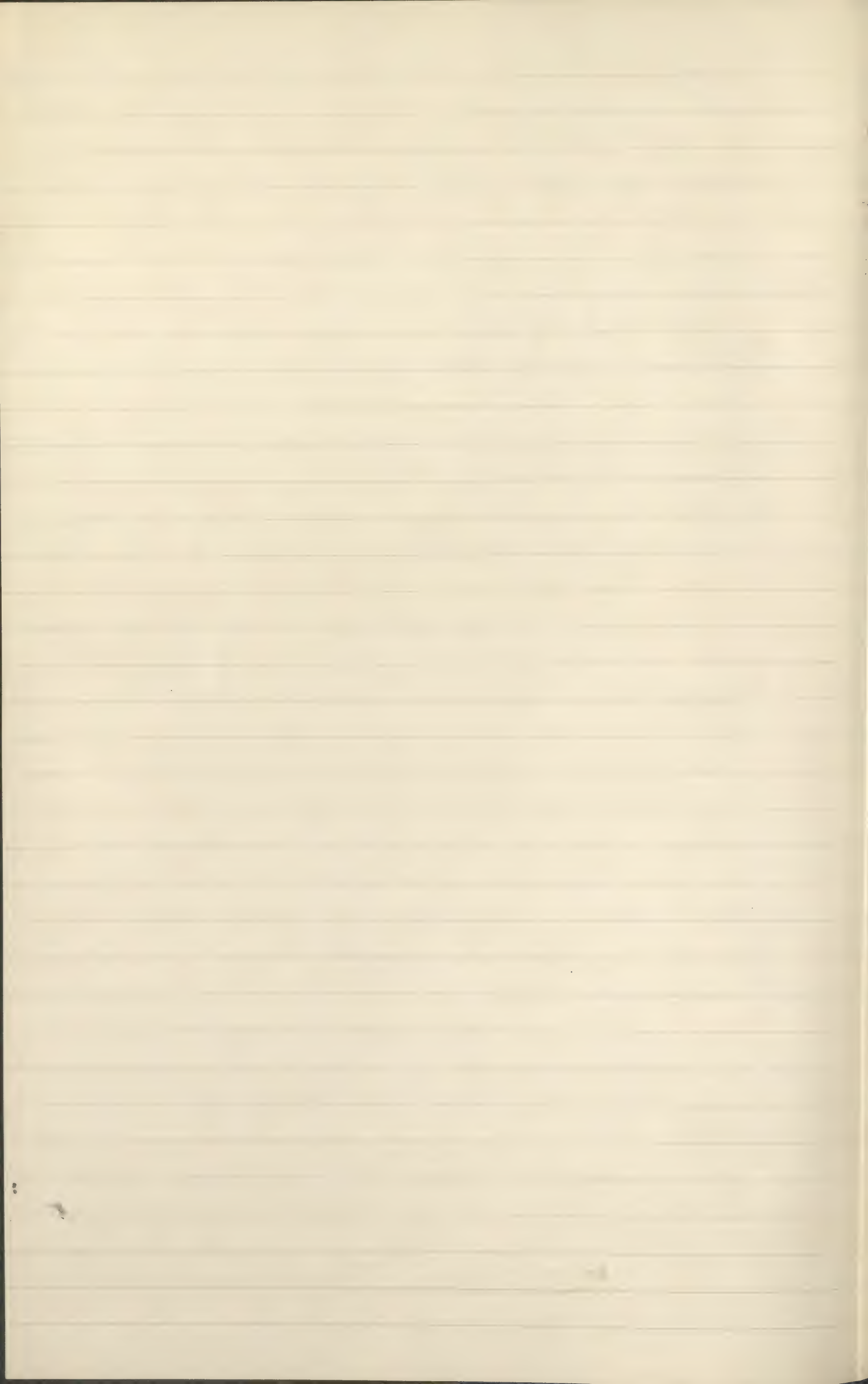
French authority has said.

That Purcell should have died at the early age of 37 was an incalculable loss to English music.

His mind had a clairvoyant, an eagerly prophetic quality which put him more in touch with modern ideas than with his own age, yet "he touched the music of his age at every point." He was strong enough to grasp all that was best in the Italian or French music of the day, and make it so much his own that he could use it again in a truly English manner. His stage music, his Operas - (~~for "Dido and Aeneas" and "Dioclesian" are practically Operas~~) his Odes for voices and orchestra, his chamber music, his songs, and his church music, all more than repay a close study of them, even at the present time, though his church music is the least satisfactory.

I have only time to give one illustration of Purcell's music, a short but intensely characteristic song, which he wrote as an extra number to his Opera "Dioclesian," or "The Prophets", produced in 1690. Purcell held that music should be the exaltation of poetry, as poetry was of prose, and in his work he certainly achieves a truth of expression which earlier composers, such as Henry Lawes had aimed at, but never accomplished.

The Song you are to hear begins "Since from my dear Astrea's sight" and I want you to notice the way in which the repetitions of the words "dear" "never" & "die" seem to heighten the poignant expression, though it was quite common at that period to employ meaningless repetitions. Purcell's music, to borrow a beautiful phrase of old William Bird's



"was perfectly framed to the life of the words"

Illustration

"Sine from my dear Astrea's sight"

Purcell's most notable contemporaries were Dr. Blow, best remembered by his anthems, Michael Wise, also best known for his church work, and Jeremiah Clarke, commonly called Jerry, a favourite pupil of Dr. Blow's, who wrote well both for church and theatre, but who seems to have possessed the artistic temperament to such a violent degree that, on account of an unhappy love affair "He shot himself with a little screw-pistol in the side of the head, as he sat in his chair by the Fireside, within less than half-an-hour after his Father and other Friends had been with him" and so died at the age of 33 on Dec 1st 1707 — so says a contemporary News Sheet.

Up to this time, the beginning of the 18th century, English music had developed very much along its own lines, adopting and adapting the great artistic principles for its own use, as they were discovered in other parts of Europe, without abdicating the right to independent thought. Also, as we have seen, English composers founded two important things — the art of Counterpoint, and the school of Keyboard playing, though the credit of developing these discoveries belongs mainly to foreign composers.

But ~~when the coming of Handel to England~~ ^{when Handel settled in} in 1712 an extraordinary eclipse came over



the national school : English individuality could hardly exist under his mighty shadow, not through Handel's fault, but through the blind idolatry lavished on him by the public, a process repeated later in the case of Mendelssohn.

From early times English folk seem to have had an idea that foreigners might be their superiors in matters musical, but in Handel's time they became convinced of it with such intensity that they reduced English music to nothing short of artistic slavery.

That national music did not altogether die under such treatment showed it had more vitality than was commonly supposed. The genuine English ring is to be heard in the works of William Croft, Maurice Green, and William Boyce who wrote principally for the church, and Thomas Augustine Arne, who was a successful writer for the stage and is best remembered now as the author of "Rule Britannia", but some very attractive instrumental work, by men such as Babell, Eccles or Jones, also dates from this time. As an example I am going to play you two movements from a Violin Sonata by Dr. Croft (b. 1678, d. 1727)

Illustration

*Adagio and Allegro of Sonata in G major
for Violin & Piano - Croft*

In the later Georgian period, Samuel Wesley (b. 1766 - d. 1837) was undoubtedly the composer in whom the genuine English spirit shone most clearly, nor was this unfitting, since he was a son of Charles Wesley, and a nephew of the famous



John Wesley.

The two most notable personalities in English music in early Victorian times, were Samuel Sebastian Wesley (b. 1810. d. 1876) a son of the Samuel Wesley already spoken of, and William Sterndale Bennett, (b. 1816. d. 1875) whom Mendelssohn hailed as a young genius when he went to Leipzig. Bennett unfortunately failed to fulfil his early promise:

his first works such as the Overtures to "Parisina" and "The Naiades" are his best and are genuinely beautiful, but they were written before he came directly under German influence, which helped to smother his individuality, though the stuffy Victorian atmosphere in which he had to work on his return to England may also have had something to do with this failure.

Samuel Sebastian Wesley, on the other hand steadily pursued his own path, devoting himself almost exclusively to Anglican music, and very insufficiently appreciated by his contemporaries. Looking back now, we can see that his work is the strongest thing English music can claim between the death of Purcell and the Renaissance of later Victorian times, and that he was a man of striking genius. He is probably best known to you by his anthem "The Wilderness" which, beautiful though it is, must rank below such superb things as his anthems "O Lord, thou art my God" and "Ascribe unto the Lord" and "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace".

But for ^{such} splendid exceptions as these the whole history of the foreign domination is a melancholy business, though possibly it was inevitable in the course of evolution that English music should suffer decline after such a period



of prolonged splendour, as that which lasted from the early Tudor times for 200 years onward.

Anyhow, I am glad to be done with it, and pass from the conclusion of my First Act, to my Second ~~Act~~ one, or Interlude — on the Folk Songs.

Now, Folk Song has a double interest, a body and soul so to speak, the first, the actual structure, representing the root from which modern Harmonic form has sprung, as exemplified in the Sonata or Symphony; the second, the subtle spirit breathing through the music the intimate heart of a nation made audible.

Sir Hubert Parry, himself one of the most distinguished musicians of the present day, has said that "True style comes not from the individual, but from the products of crowds of fellow workers, who sift and try and try again, till they have found the thing that suits their native taste; and the purest product of such efforts is folksong, which when it is found outlasts the greatest works of art and becomes an heritage to generations. And in that heritage may lie the ultimate solution of the problem of characteristic national art."

And Grieg, most patriotic of Norwegian composers, did not hesitate to say of English Folk Songs that they "will doubtless be able to form the basis of a national style, as they have done in other lands, those of the greatest musical culture not excepted."

It thus becomes evident that Folk Song holds a very important place in our national music.

It has been well known for a long time that Ireland, Scotland and Wales possess a rich store of Folk Music, but it is only within the last few years that the

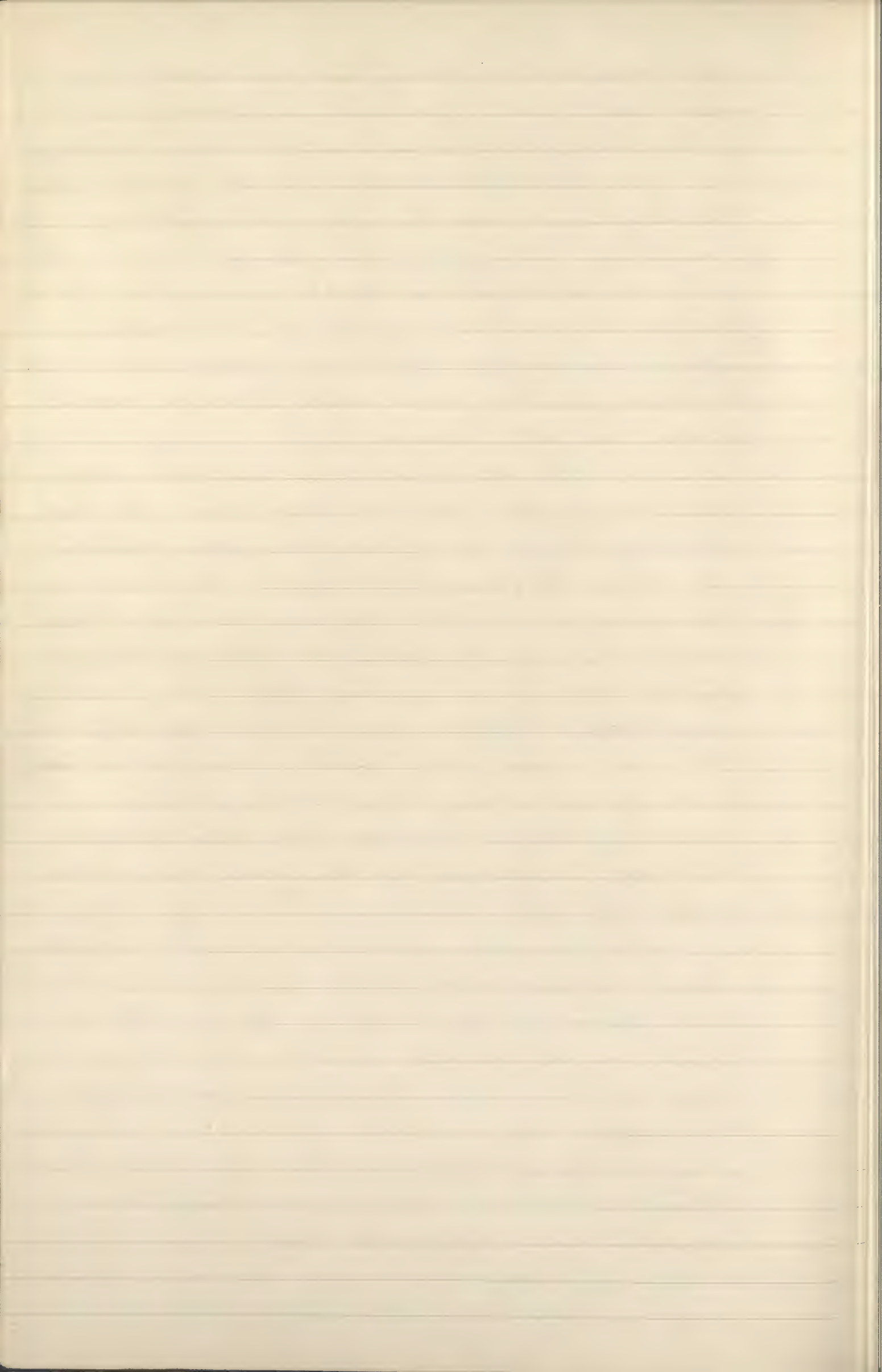


efforts of the Folk Song Society have demonstrated the fact that England possesses an equally fine Folk Literature. Here, as in other countries, the songs fall into three broad classes, lyrical, ballad, and dancing tunes, and they often bear traces of considerable antiquity, many of them indeed being in those Ecclesiastical Modes which went out of use at the beginning of the 17th century.

The Songs are very widely Known all up and down the country, and many different variants of them are often to be found, for it must be borne in mind that nearly all these songs have been passed on by oral tradition from singer to singer for generations, sometimes with rather startling results in the case of the words. For instance, the name of one song was given to a folk-song collector as "Judy Credio". The singer thought it was the name of an Irish girl, but another man said "No, it means 'What a Jew believes'."

Even more surprising was another song heard by a member of the Folk-Song Society, in which the words "Diminy Darey ran through the Wood" occurred. On the singer being asked what Diminy Darey meant, he said he thought it was a dromedary, and a good deal of conversation took place about the matter. Later on the same poem was discovered on an old Ballad-Sheet, and the mysterious dromedary resolved itself into, "a little timid hare ran through the wood."

Speaking broadly the main characteristics of English Folk Songs tend toward fresh, clean, energetic tunes, with great beauty and freedom of melodic outline, and the tender, more poetic qualities are not lacking. Though the



Irish Folk Songs may excel them in respect of passion and poetry, the Welsh in sentiment, and the Scotch in a sort of untutored pathos and spirituality, yet they can hold their own against all for sheer healthy beauty and joy of life.

In estimating our musical resources, however, we should do ill to exalt one Folk Music over another, one race over another, since all are needed if the best results are to follow. Saxon strength is not enough without that deep sense of poetry which the Celts possess.

I think therefore you may be interested to hear four folk Songs — one from each part of the Kingdom. Even from these short examples you will be able to hear that our Folk Music can show an equality with that of any country abroad.

And more too, for Irish Folk Music is the finest in the world.

My first example is a pathetic old Irish Folk tune, called "Over there" which is typical of the ~~pathetic~~ fatalistic side of the national character, though it necessarily ~~does not~~ does not show the fire of the War Songs, the sparkle of the humorous ones, or the grace of the Love Songs.

Illustration

"Over there"

The second illustration is a Welsh Folk Song "Gweruylth Gwyn" an exquisite example of a lyric tune. The words are an English version, the original Welsh being impossible to pronounce save to a Welshman.

Gweruylth Gwyn



The third example is a Scotch Folk tune, which illustrates the lyric class of Song.

Illustration

Scotch Folk Tune

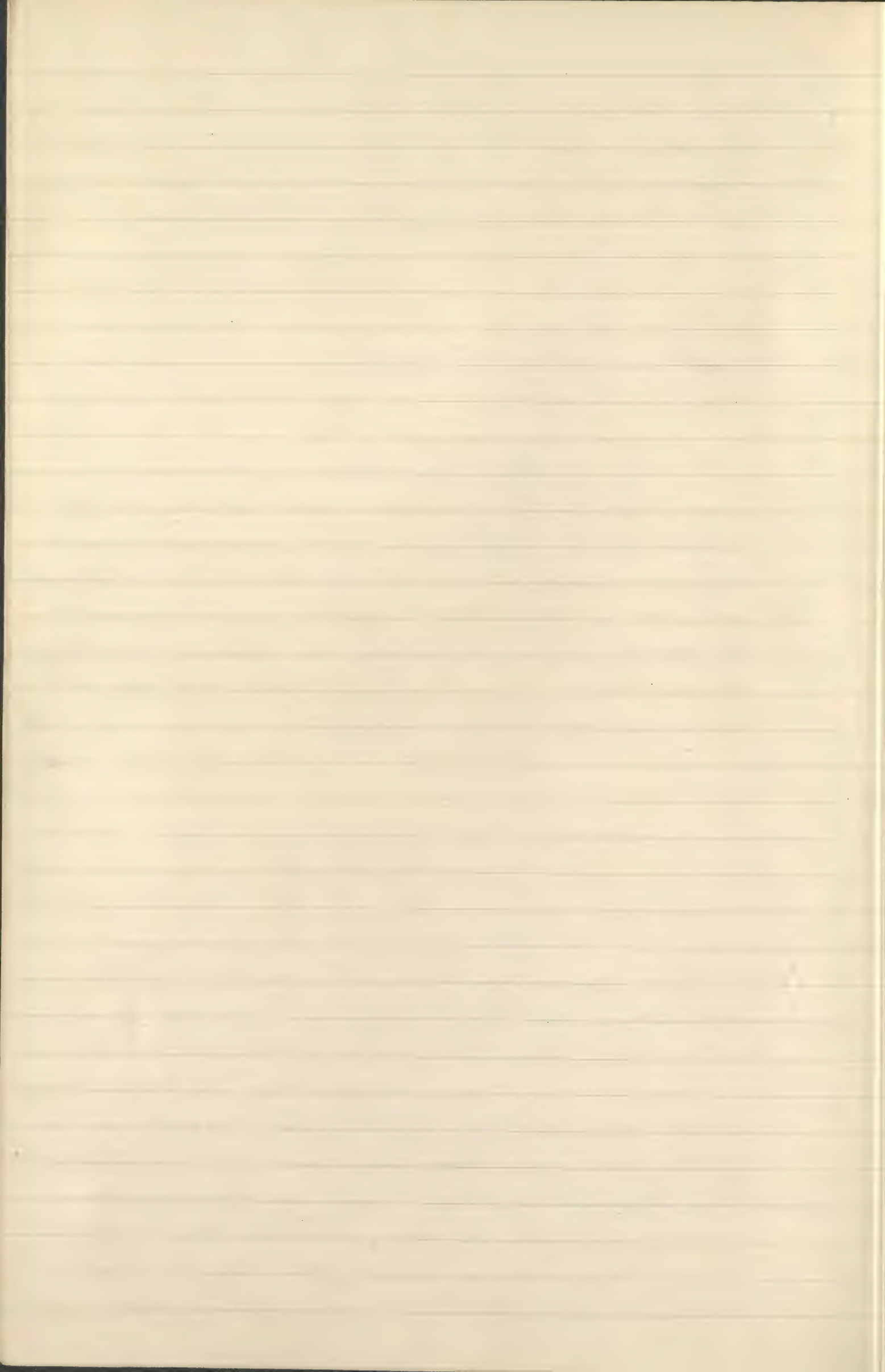
The last example is a ballad found in Hampshire by Dr. Gardiner, and called "On the Banks of the Nile". The piano accompaniment has been arranged by Mr. von Holst, a well-known composer of the new English School, and it is thanks to his kindness in lending me the unpublished manuscript, that I am able to show the song to you tonight.

Illustration

"On the Banks of the Nile"

This brings me to the 3rd part of my lecture — I mean that Renaissance of English Music which began about the middle of the 19th century.

Most people probably realize now that something of the sort has taken place, but I doubt if the public at large have any idea of how strong the impulse is, how much has already been concretely achieved, and how rich the promise is for the future. It is a fact that when I began to jot down the names of English



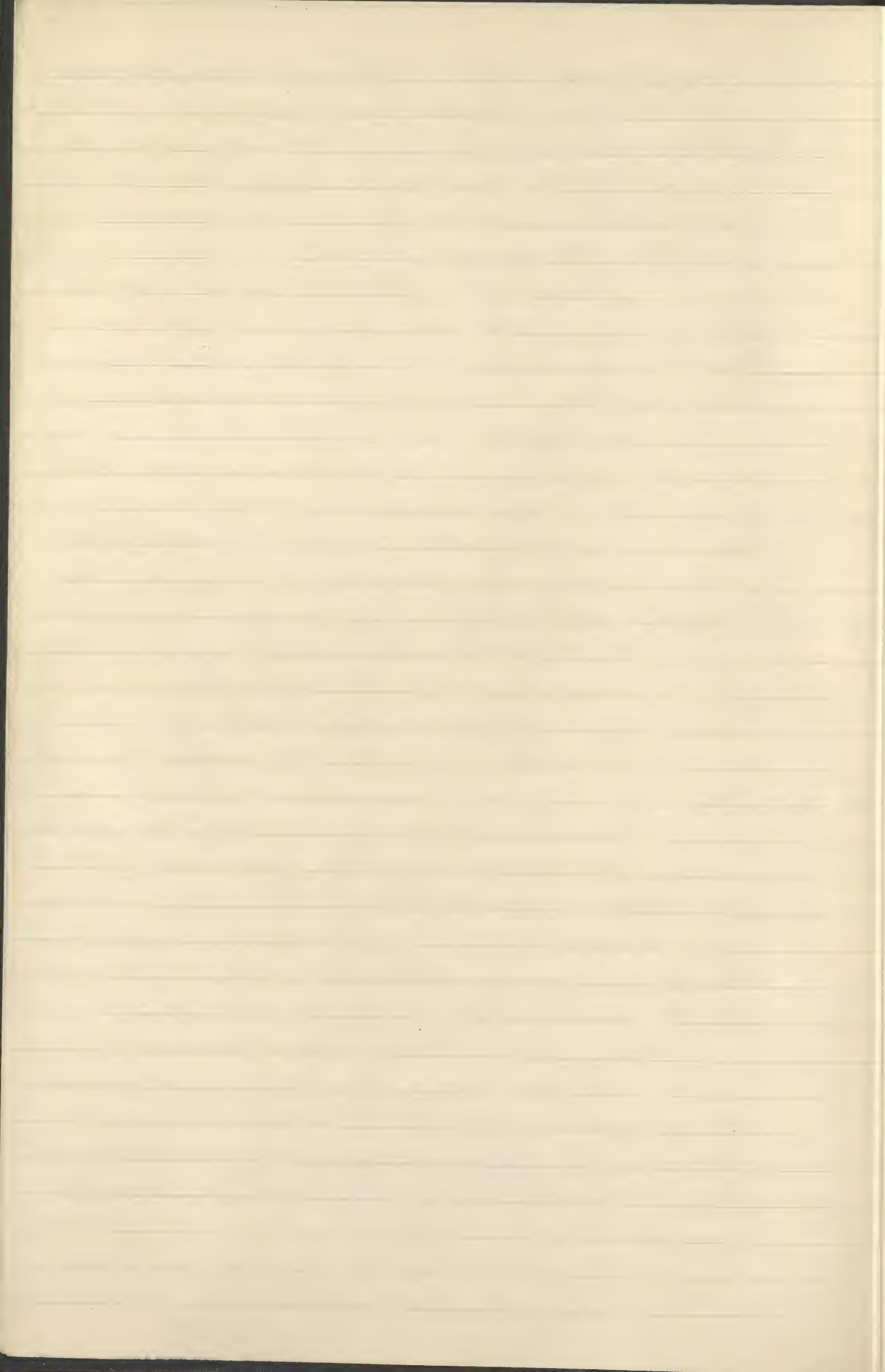
composers who have given us sincere, artistic work during the later Victorian and Edwardian periods, the list extended from top to bottom of a sheet of paper as long as this, and I found that still I had forgotten to include one or two names that were quite worthy of mention.

Of course this does not mean that all these composers are geniuses, but it does mean that they are artists, not artisans, at their work; that they each have something individual that is worth saying and worth hearing: and that amongst them are a few composers, some already recognised, others probably too young as yet to have won full recognition of their artistic gifts — who possess that thing which everyone tries to explain and can't — that wonderful thing genius.

Indeed it is my honest conviction that there never was such an interesting time in English music, as the present, and it is not a euphuistic phrase, but a sober statement of fact, to say that "In every department, plentiful as are the opportunities for deeper culture that still remain, the advance that has coincided with the Renaissance of composition has been very remarkable; an English born and home staying musician has now a position of perfect artistic equality with his continental colleague."

This quotation comes from Dr Ernest Walker's "History of English Music" and any one who reads the book will see that he is no easy-going critic but one who measures his art by one standard only — and that the highest. So his conclusions carry considerable weight.

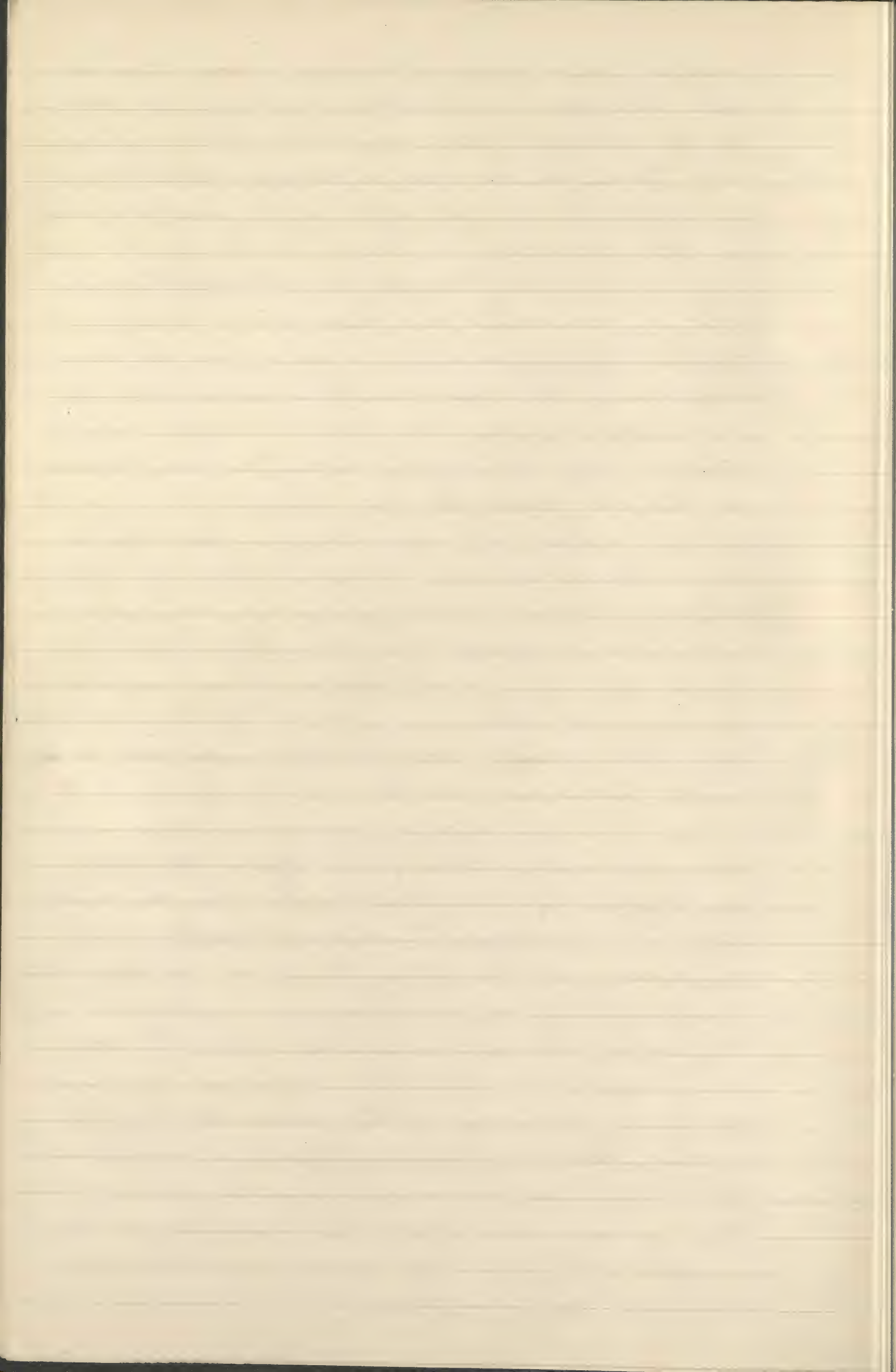
If we look back to the middle of the 19th century, which is the time when all these



wonderful things began to happen, we find that at first there were few signs of anything remarkable.

Of the seven most gifted composers who began life about then not one was a prodigy happily for themselves and for us, and no one could forecast in 1835, when August Manns started the famous Orchestral Saturday Concerts at the Crystal Palace, what a marvellous part they were to play in the musical education of the country, and the encouragement of composers. Four years later in 1839, the St James Hall Popular Concerts were started, these practically doing the same work for Chamber Music that the Crystal Palace Concerts did for orchestral. Such historic institutions as the Royal Academy of Music and the Philharmonic Society had already been in existence a number of years, and were responsible for much valuable work, but as things happened they were not entirely free from the old-fashioned ideas about music, and therefore were not so directly connected with the new movement.

I have already said that there were seven composers, more gifted than the others who began life contemporarily about the middle of the 19th century. These seven, starting with the eldest, are Sir Arthur Sullivan, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Hubert Parry, Young Thomas, Sir Frederick Cowen, Sir Charles Stanford, and Sir Edward Elgar, but they have not all had an equal influence on the course of English music. Both Sir Arthur Sullivan who died in 1900, and Young Thomas who died in 1892, stood rather apart from the main course of development, and were essentially composers of light music.



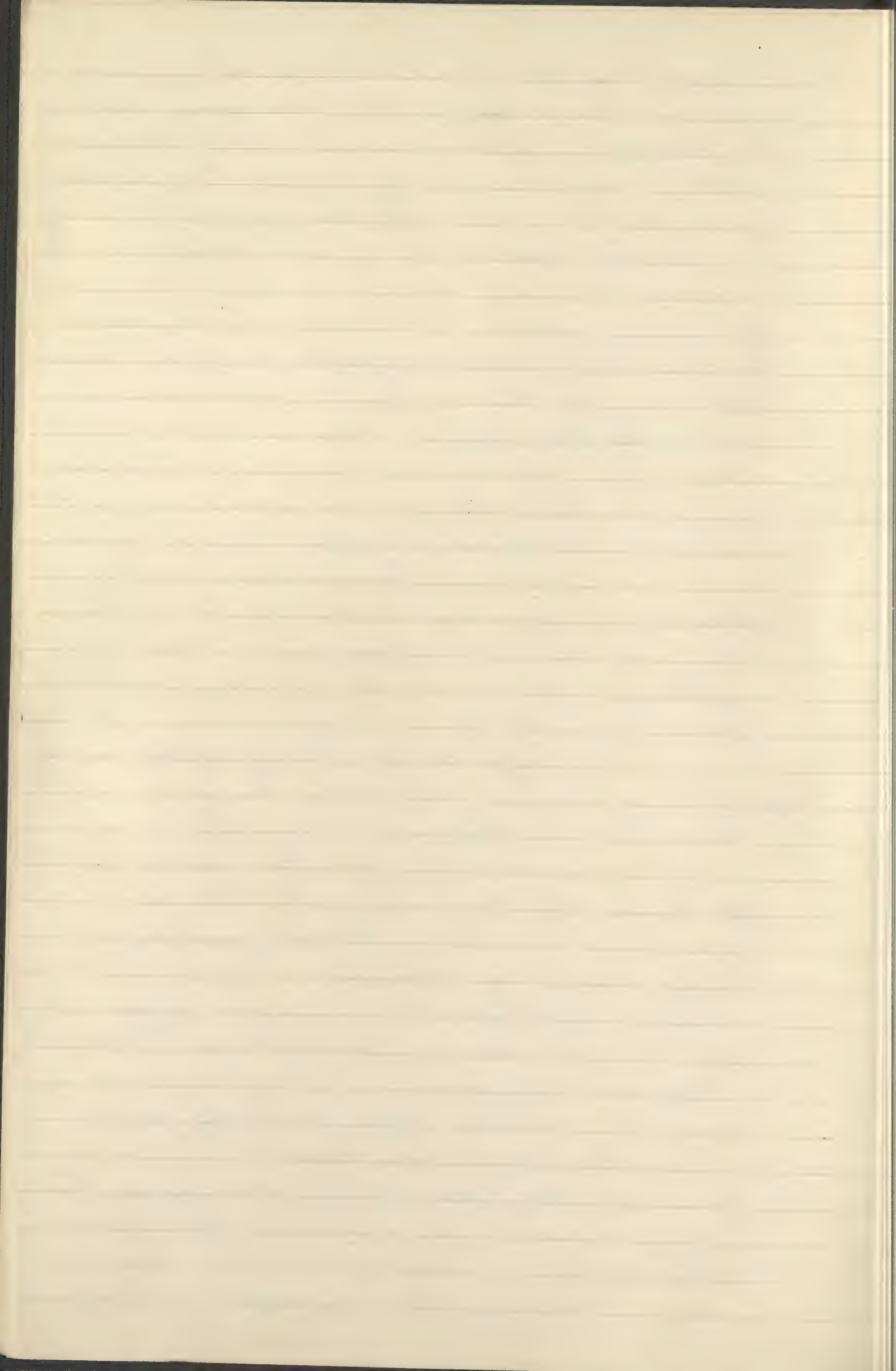
Though such things as Sullivan's Savoy Operas are quite inimitable in their own way, they do not appeal to the essential stuff of human hearts and minds, since the old-time legend that a building would not stand unless a slave, — a human heart — were buried beneath it, is a parable of artistic truth.

Young Thomas has been described as "the most Parisianised of all English composers". His talent was light, charming and graceful, and his best works, the Operas of "Esmeralda" and "Waldschla" contain most delightful music, but his Parisian tendencies, and the premature end of his career, make him a rather isolated figure.

The five composers who remain are placed by consensus of public opinion as the leaders of the Renaissance, and of these, two, Mackenzie and Cowen, are not very easy to place.

Mackenzie began to be recognised as a factor in English Music about the years 1881 to 84, and his music is always thoroughly sincere and artistic, but about middle life the claims of other work seem to have encroached on his composition, and his development was retarded. He has been described as a type of a transition period composer. His best known works are "Colomba" "The dream of Jubal" "The Rose of Sharon" and an orchestral ballad on Keats' poem "La belle dame sans merci".

Dr Cowen, on the other hand, has lately produced work which is so different from his earlier compositions, that it has come upon us with almost the shock of a double



personality. Up to such a recent time as 1907 he was regarded ~~as~~ primarily as a composer of light music, a consummate master of "Fairies" revels, though in such works as his "Scandinavian Symphony," (which first brought him into prominence in 1880) and his Ode to the Passions, he showed a stronger, more serious side.

Then, just a few months ago, — at the Cardiff Festival in October — he produced a choral work "The Veil" which is planned on the most serious scale, and is so startlingly modern in its methods that I think you may be interested to hear a few bars of the opening, coupled with a few bars from the prelude to an earlier work: "The Rose Maiden." Posterity will probably decide which is the true Cowen.

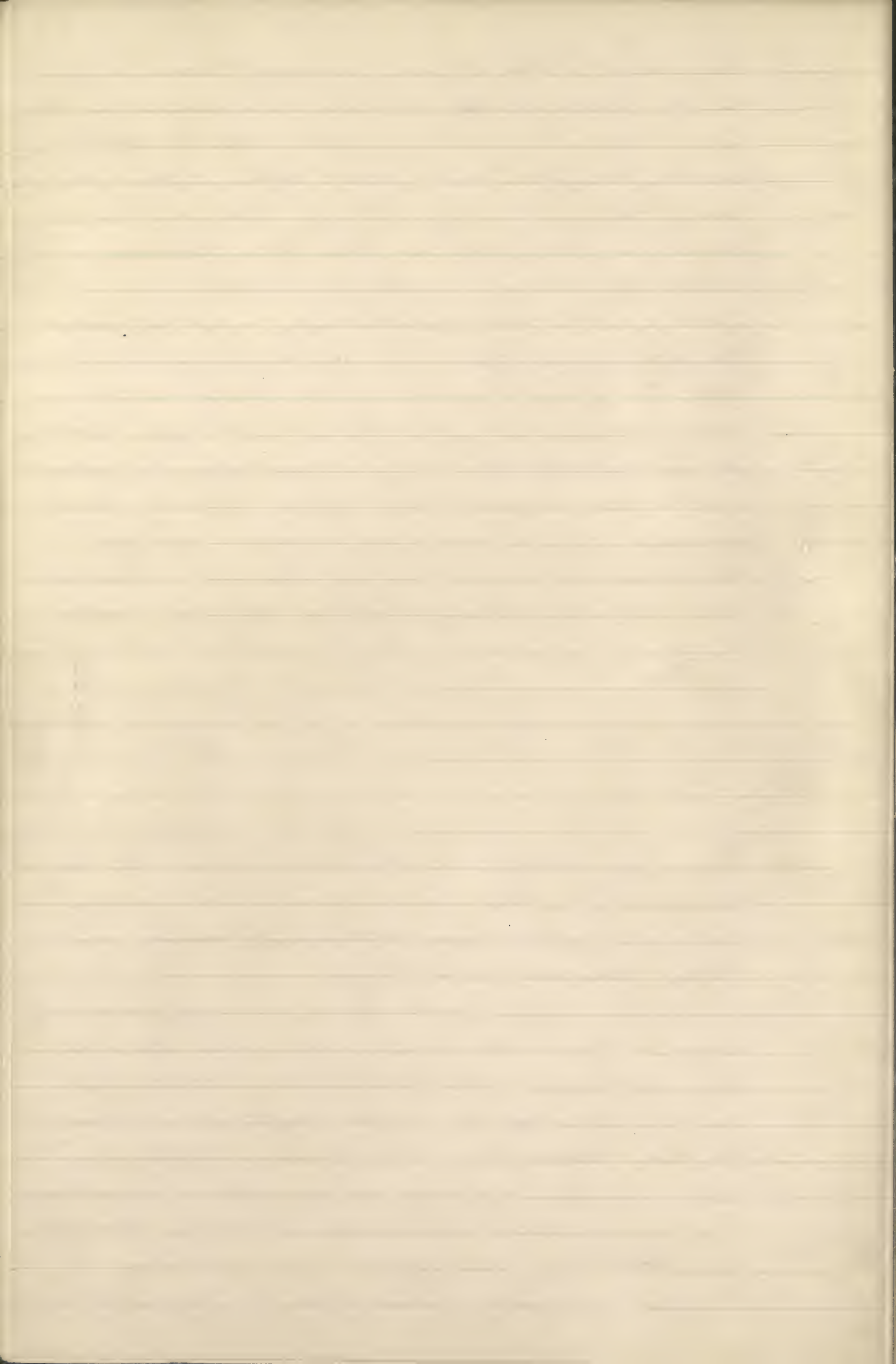
Mr. T. J. ...

"The Rose Maiden"

...

The three leaders of the Renaissance who have exerted by far the most powerful and continuous influence on the course of English music are Parry, Stanford, and Elgar.

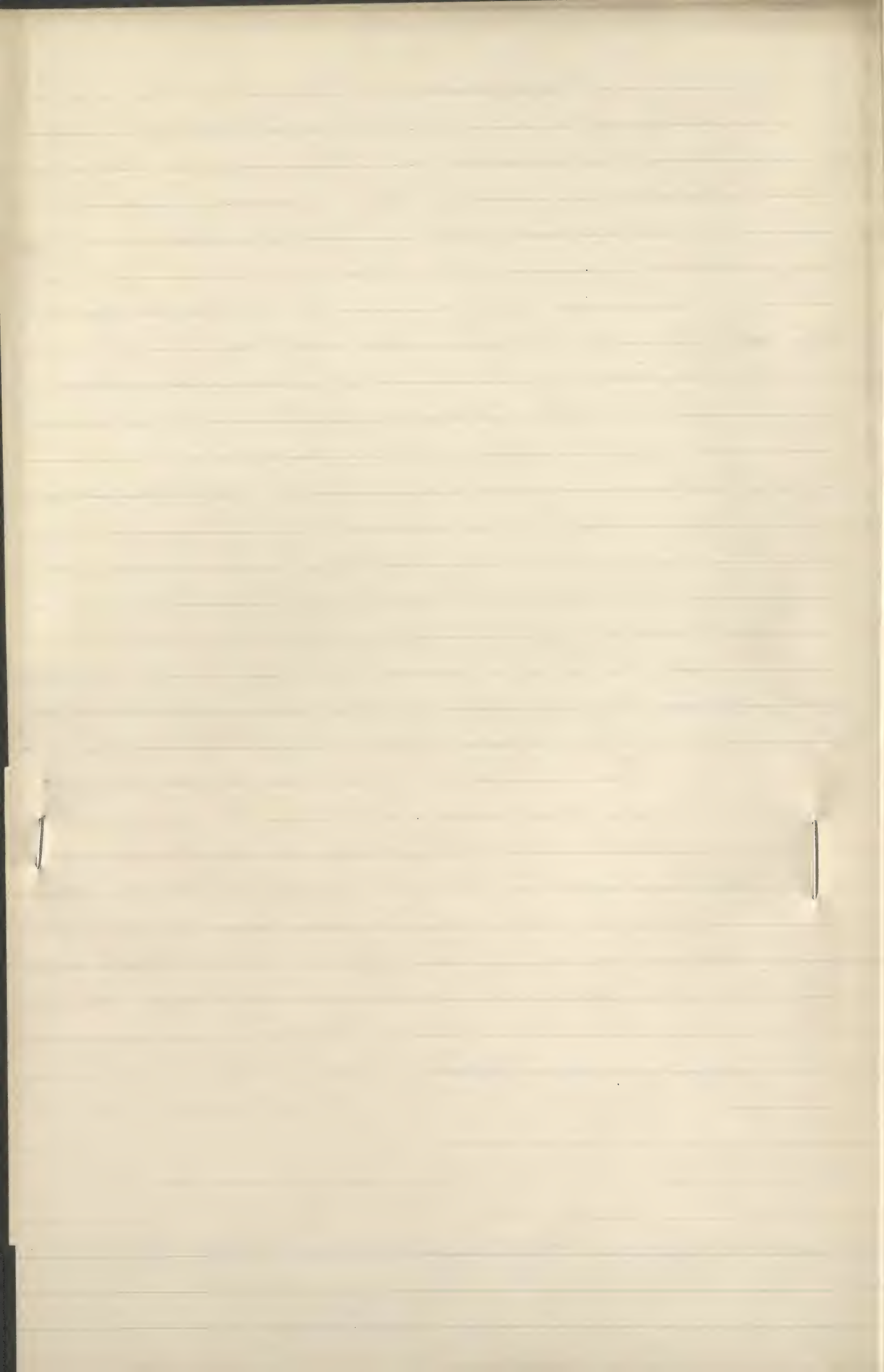
Sir Hubert Parry was not originally destined for a musical career, but when he did definitely enter on his life work, he quickly became one of the most vital forces English music has ever known. September 7th, 1880, the day on which his Cantata "Prometheus Unbound" was first produced at the Gloucester Festival, has been called "the birthday of English music." Since then Sir Hubert Parry



has more than fulfilled the promise of that day, giving us a noble series of works for chorus and orchestra, besides several symphonies, the Symphonic Variations for Orchestra, a long series of songs, and some fine chamber music. Such works as "Blest pair of Syrens," "Job", "L' Allegro", "De Profundis", "Ode to Music", "The Lotus Eaters", "War and Peace", "The Love that Casteth out fear", and "Voices Clamantium" move on the loftiest plane of art: grandeur of thought is allied to a consummate mastery of technique, and indeed Parry has often been called "the English Bach".

It would probably be very far from Sir Hubert's wish that much should be said about him - his marked literary gifts, the great qualities that he has displayed as Director of the Royal College of Music; and I will therefore leave some of his music to speak for itself.

As an illustration, I propose to show you two movements from a Suite of his for Violin and Piano. Though such small things as these cannot show his extraordinary power of building up great choral climaxes, or of fitting his words and music most perfectly to each other in accent, they will yet serve to show you something of the strength, absolute sincerity, and originality of his work. The first movement is a Prelude; the second is an ~~called~~ "Intermezzo" ~~and shows the light and dainty side~~ full of charm and freshness.

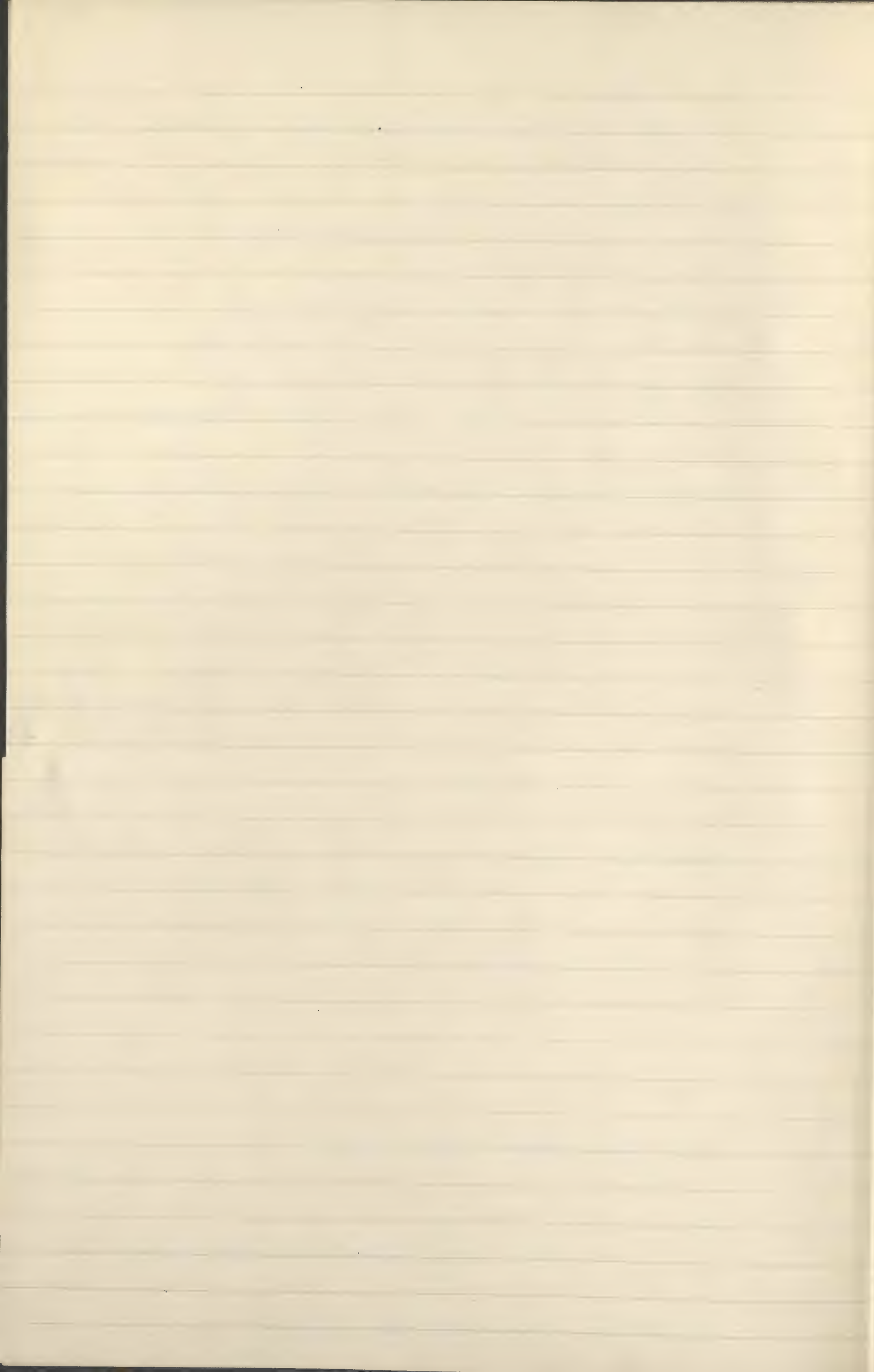


Sir Charles Stanford is an Irishman and has all the characteristic Irish qualities of poetry, wit and versatility to the full, in addition to remarkable artistic judgment and steadfastness of purpose.

It is a great thing to say of a composer that he has never written anything unworthy of his high ideal, but it is absolutely true of Sir Charles Stanford. Ever since his music to Queen Mary was produced in 1876, it has been realized that he is one of the most gifted composers we possess, and his works cover a remarkably wide range. Operas, orchestral music, choral music, chamber music, solo music, church music, — he has worked in all these departments, and conferred distinction on them. You are probably familiar with such wholly delightful things as his Opera "Shamus O'Brien" or the fine Sea Songs, but his Stabat Mater, produced at the Leeds Festival in 1907, is perhaps the finest of all his works up to the present. I cannot give you any idea of its scope and beauty without having a full orchestra, chorus, and soloists at command, but perhaps part of the Introduction played on the piano may show you his type of thought. So I am afraid it will not be possible to illustrate it.

Last of this trio of composers^{is} Sir Edward Elgar, whose history presents the picture of a man practically self-taught, battling on for years without recognition, who has now achieved a European fame.

The first glimmering of understanding that here was a composer who might really

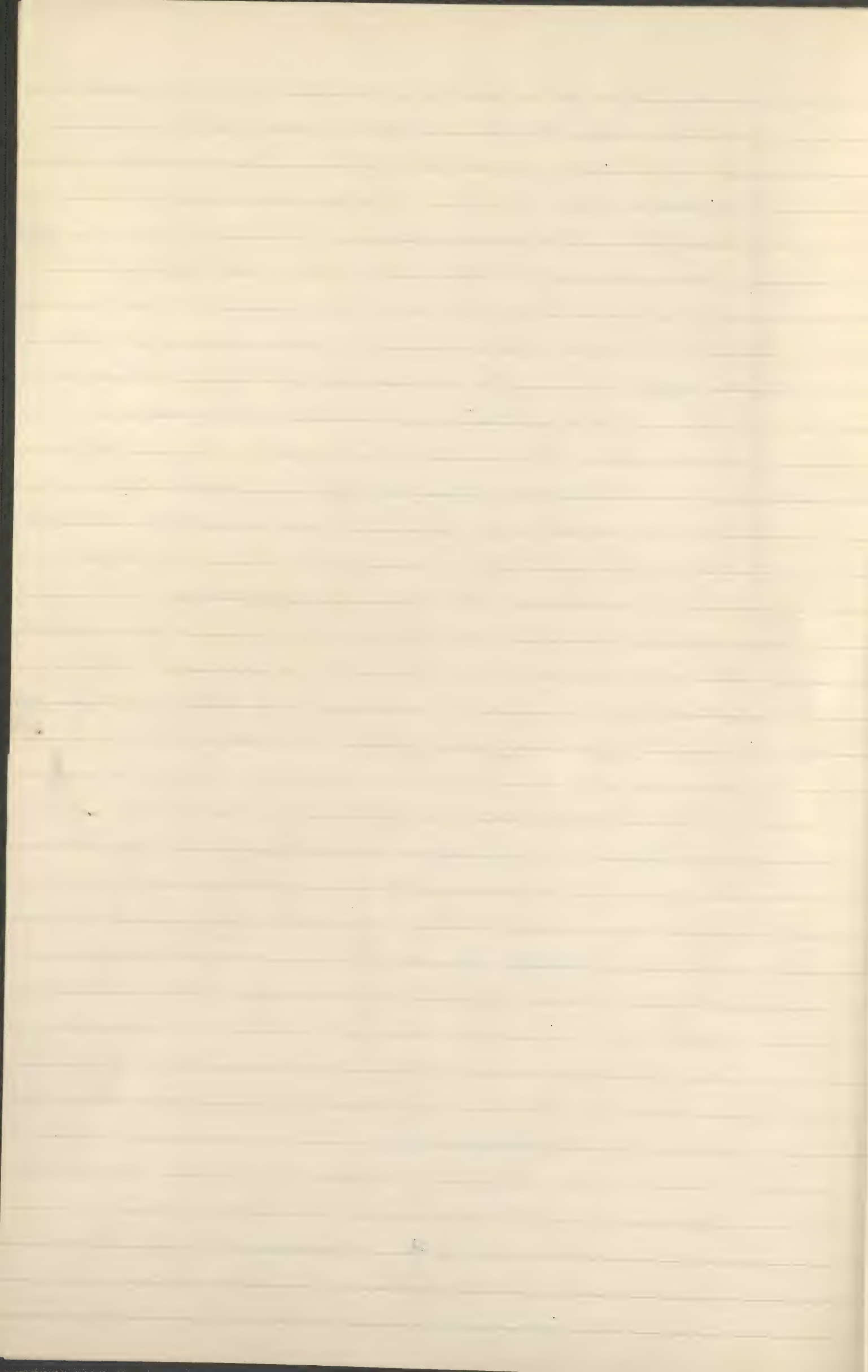


count, came to the public about 1896, after the production of "King Olaf," but the impression did not become clearer about 1899, when his *Enigma* variations for Orchestra, and the "Sea Pictures" for Contralto and orchestra were produced.

Up to this point the public were not altogether to blame for their lack of discernment, for Elgar's early compositions are inferior to the splendid works he has given to the world within the last twelve years, and it is the prerogative of individuals rather than of the public to discern prophetic signs of the future. But it is a matter for lasting regret that "The Dream of Gerontius" (which many regard even to this day as Elgar's finest choral work) should have met with so little understanding when produced at the Birmingham Festival of 1900. The performance was not an illuminating one, it is true, but the fact remains that the public quite failed to grasp what Elgar was aiming at, and it remained for the Germans to show us the precious thing we possessed.

"Gerontius was given at Düsseldorf, at the Lower Rhenish Festival in May 1902, with tremendous success, and at a banquet after the concert, Richard Strauss, the most distinguished German composer alive, made a speech in which he referred to England's musical greatness in the middle ages, and subsequent decline, owing to the lack of leaders, adding that the gap was now filled, and asking those present to drink to the health of the British Musical Renaissance, and especially of Dr. Elgar as he was then.

An account of this appeared in the "Times" shortly afterwards, rousing everyone in an extraordinary way, and when "The Dream of Gerontius



was given at the Worcester Festival in September of that year, it at once took its place, as a work far above the common. In the years since then Sir Edward Elgar has given us other choral works, the striking "Concert Overture" "In the South", the Symphony in Ab. and latest of all the beautiful violin Concerto in B. minor. Elgar has complete command of all the means of harmonic expression, his orchestration is of the highest order that musical history can show, and his music is intensely alive and human in its appeal. No illustrations can fully convey the beauty of his works — you must go and hear them for yourselves if you want to get that, — but I think you may be interested to hear a little of the Prelude to the "Dream of Gerontius", which will give you some idea of his command of harmonic colour. Though of course a piano cannot reproduce the heart-moving tones of the orchestra.

Illustration — Prelude to Gerontius

Though Elgar belongs to the old generation of composers he came to his own in the matter of recognition so recently, that I must go back again a little, if I am to trace the course of music throughout the later part of the 19th century — the time when the Renaissance began to show its full strength.

The six principal composers who come a step later in point of time than the Five Leaders, ^{of the Renaissance} are, Edward German, Frederick Delius, Granville Bantock, Dr. Walford Davies, ~~and~~ Dr. Ernest Walker, and Dr. Charles Wood.



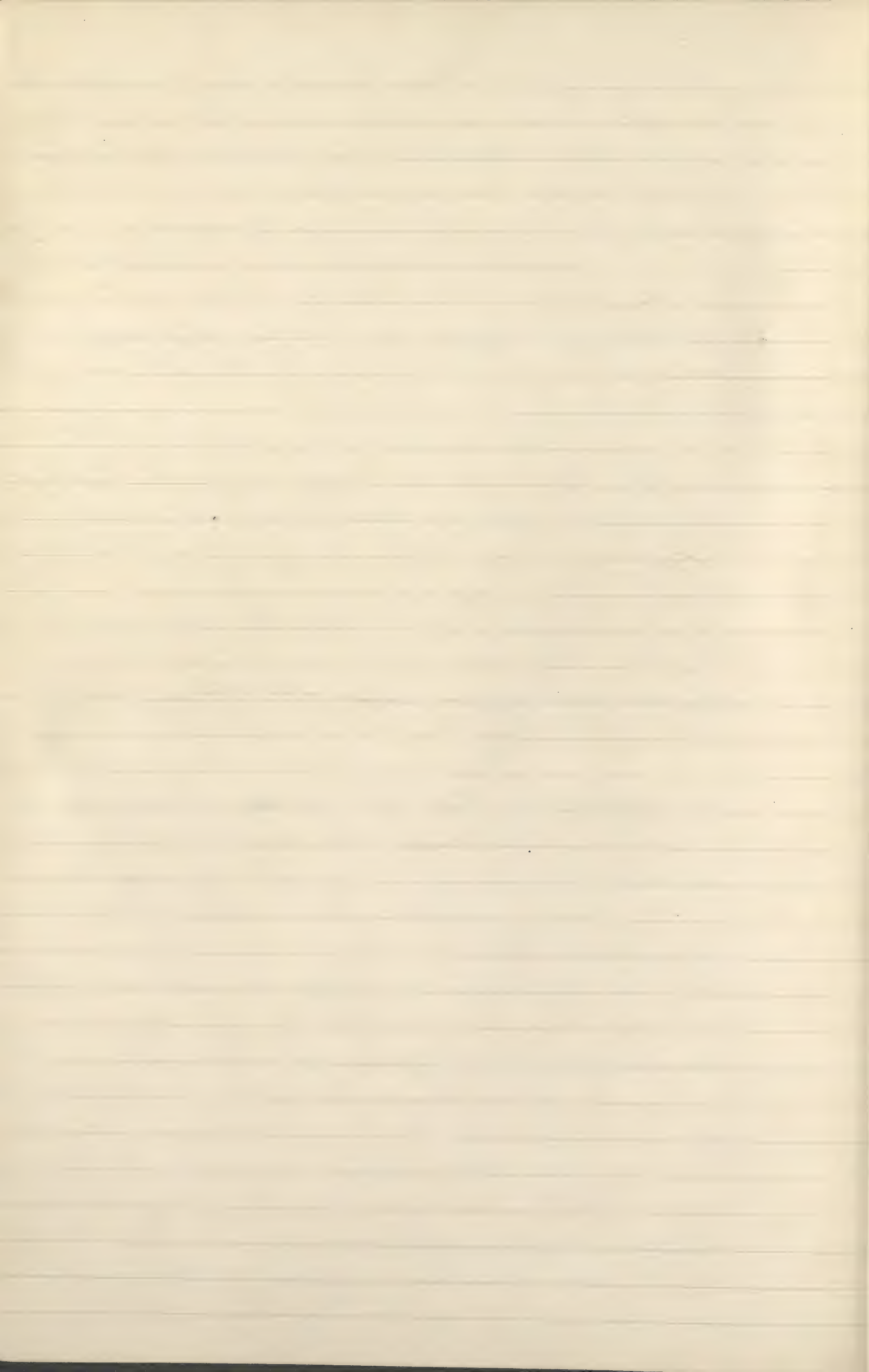
Of these, I prefer to leave Delius outside consideration just now, since his parents were German, and he has spent most of his life abroad, his claims as an English composer being mainly urged because his family resided in Bradford.

Granville Bantock is an extraordinarily prolific composer, with ideas on a large scale, and a strong bent towards an Eastern colouring in his music;— he, like Delius, is a very clever orchestrator.

Edward German is best known by his light Operas, and his Incidental music to plays; he possesses a genuine fund of sincerely artistic thought, and has written successfully in other forms of art.

In their earlier years Dr Wood and Dr Wallace both gave fine promise, and their concrete achievements have not fallen short of the high standard they set themselves.

Dr Walford Davies is one of the most striking and individual factors in contemporary composition. Great things were expected of him from his student days, and his remarkable Cantata "Everyman," (produced at the Leeds Festival in 1904,) showed that this estimate was not a mistaken one. He has written a number of important works for concert-room and church use, and his newest work is a Symphony, which is to be produced by the London Symphony Orchestra at a Concert next May. His musical genius covers a very wide range, being equally at home with the beautiful, tranquil things in Nature, the thoughts and games of children, or the most searching experiences of the human creature — as in the life and death of



"Every man." His work is watched with great interest by musicians on account of the new methods which he is developing - notably a certain means of enharmonic modulation

also a new method of combining several keys at once, which contains unexpectedly great possibilities.

As an illustration of his work, I am only able today to show you a small, and rather early ~~piece of work~~ ^{however} composition, however, since he has written but little for violin & piano. The movement we are going to play you comes from a Violin Sonata in D minor, and represents the fresh, genuine English quality of his work - the love of the open air and spring time. You will notice the movement has a sort of poetical allusion in its ~~first~~ first theme to the call of the cuckoo.

Illustration - Entrata - Noble Numbers
"When Children Play"

A marked impetus was given to the musical Renaissance by the ^{opening} ~~founding~~ of the Royal College of Music in ~~1882~~ ¹⁸⁸³, and since then the Royal Academy has also educated a number of clever composers, while the Paton's Fund and the Cobbett Competitions have recently done fine service in the cause of national Chamber music.

Following on the six composers last enumerated, come a veritable crowd



of younger men. It is indeed, quite impossible to describe their work, nor is it desirable to pronounce anything like an individual verdict on it, for in nearly all the instances, the composers have not yet attained to their ~~true~~^{mature} style.

It is, however, safe to say this much — that their work maintains a wonderfully high level, and in some cases, like that of Coleridge Taylor, the composers have attained wide celebrity.

There are two or three names I should like to mention, however, for various reasons. Dr. Vaughn-Williams has been known for some years as a promising musician, but his later work has shown him to be one of the most original composers we possess. He has studied continental methods, notably the modern French — without any permanent unbalancing of his individual qualities, and his work is the most "modern" — (in the sense that Ravel or Strauss are modern) — of all the English composers. His Sea Symphony, performed for the first time in October at the Leeds Festival is a singularly noble and picturesque work.

Mrs Ethel Smythe is the leading woman-composer of the present-day, and the great interest excited by the production of her opera "The Wreckers" ~~last year~~ is probably still fresh in your minds.

The last name I should like to mention is ~~that~~ William Yates Hurlstone, a brilliant young composer who died at the age of 30. The work he did was of such genuine artistic value that it held an even greater promise for the future — a promise which



can never now be fulfilled.

This concludes my Third Act, and my Epilogue shall be brief. I will only ask you to remember that wonderful as is the progress made by the Renaissance, there are more wonderful possibilities still, but that their actual fulfillment is a thing which rests with all of us.

✕ English music should be neither tabooed nor treated as a fetish, but should be approached in a wide-minded, unprejudiced spirit: a spirit which is quick to apprehend and love the best, whether it is found at home or abroad, whether it is an English folk-tune or a Beethoven symphony.

True understanding not only increases our own enjoyment, but helps to create an atmosphere in which Art thrives and English music is worth this help.

✕ The ideals of one generation may become the realities of the next, but this cannot happen unless the ideals are lived out; that is an individual responsibility, an individual problem we each have to solve for ourselves.

In the long run character counts for more than anything else in Art: and so it must be with English Music.





List of Illustrations



1. Song of Agincourt
- x 2. King's Hunting Jigg
3. "Sweet from my dear Arthur's Sight" Purcell
4. Two movements of Crot-Sonata

- #
- Folk Songs x 1. "Over There"
2. "Ewenth Ewyrn"
- x 3. "Age wakin"
4. "The Banks of the Nile"

Piano - Cowan.

Modern Part. "Song from "War & Peace" Pury

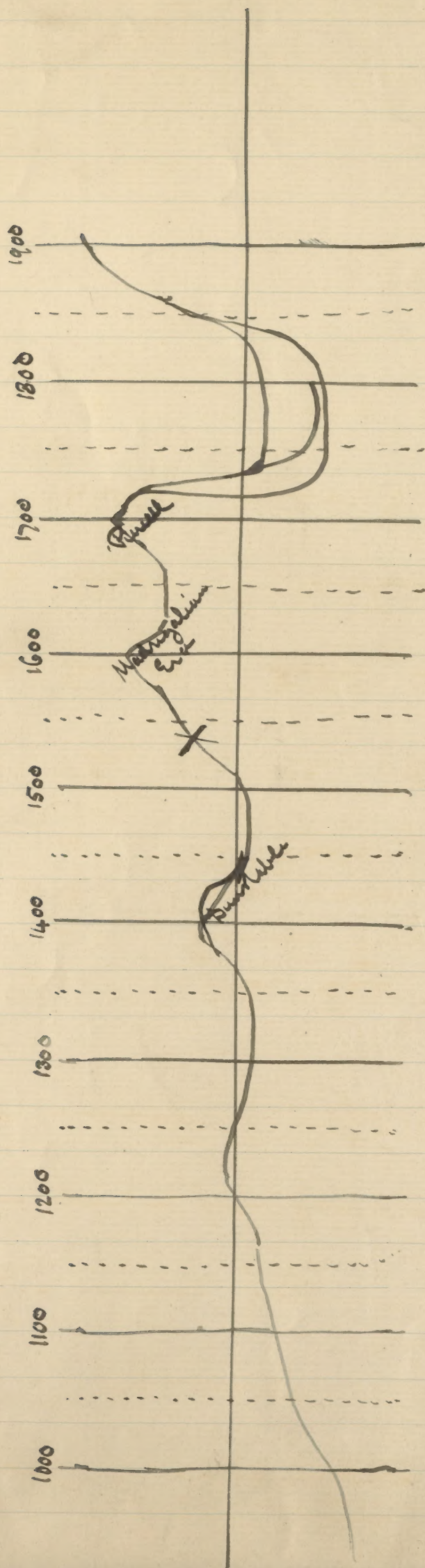
x Stanford "Stabat Mater"

x Elgar - Variations

Walford Davies, Entrata from Noble Numbers

x Song "When Children Play"





Movements from "A Celtic Suite" for Violin & Piano... Ernest Farrar
(first performance in public)

1. "Daluia" (Andante), 2. "The Laughter of Scathack" (con fuoco)

In this Suite, founded on Celtic stories by Fiona Macleod, each movement

